

Filed subject to approval

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Held Remotely

Join Zoom Meeting

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November 16, 2021 - 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Petruzzelli, Almeida

Others: 26 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 7:37 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 19, 2021 ER9 Joint Boards of Education Special meeting, and the October 21, 2021 Region 9 Board of Education Special meeting as submitted. (D'Agostino, O'Brien). Approved. 6-0-1. (Denny abstained).

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 19, 2021 Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting with the following revisions: "S. Lehburger" should be stricken; "J. McTague" should be stricken from the list of attendees; in the 2nd Motion "Approved. Unanimous." should be added; the word "possible" should be stricken; under Student Comment "Audrey Gil set a new school record" and the word "regular" should be added; in the Motion about a bequest "the donation of" and "with great appreciation" should be added; about the boiler "a contract beginning in June 2021 was signed to maintain the boiler" should be stricken, and "the Board was informed that a contract appears to have been initiated by the previous Finance Director without prior Board approval or required notifications. This action may have occurred at the end of June 2021" should be added; "into Executive Session," should be added; and under Adjournment "Personnel Search Special," should be stricken. (Graziano, O'Brien). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 28, 2021 ER9 Boards of Education Special meeting with the following revisions: "divisiness" should read "divisiveness;" "de Jesus" should read "De Jesus;" "Petruzzelli" should read "Petruzzelli;" "McKinon" should read "McKinnon;" and, "with BOE members being in consensus on the majority of the items" should be stricken. (Williams, O'Brien). Approved. 7-0-1. (Denny abstained).

STUDENT COMMENT

Ben Cerbin, JBHS Student Government Representative, reported that school spirit is great after five days of Spirit Week that culminated in a pep rally and a commanding win by the football team; unfortunately the bonfire was cancelled due to bad weather. He also reported that: so far 30 students have qualified for the world language seal at graduation; girls' soccer and girls' volleyball raised \$2,000 and \$800, respectively, for breast cancer research; boys' cross country won the SWCs; girls' soccer and boys' cross country were each awarded the SWC Sportsmanship Award; the National Honor Society is holding a food drive for the Dorothy Day House in Danbury; the fall show "Beauty & the Beast," premiers this Thursday; and there are upcoming winters concerts and coffee houses.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Parkin, Indian Hill Road, Redding, acknowledged retiring Region 9 BOE member, Maureen Williams, saying that it was wonderful to work with her and thanked her for her contribution to the BOE.

Devin Wible, Woodlawn Road, Easton, thanked Maureen Williams for her intelligence and contribution to Region 9, and said welcome to new BOE members.

Beth Natt, Maple Road, Easton, expressed her appreciation to Maureen Williams and said she appreciated Dr. McKinnon's communication about the water issue at JBHS.

Heather Whaley, Windy Hill Road, Redding, thanked Maureen Williams for all of her help over the years.

Debbi Barer, Hay Street, Easton, thanked Maureen Williams for her intelligence, expertise and class, and said that she's done so much for our town over the years.

Anne Manusky, Morning Glory Lane, Easton, asked: why isn't this meeting in person; why isn't masking of our children on the agenda; why isn't a review of the ESSER grant on the agenda; and who is on the review of the ESSER vendors?

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. Williams read a prepared statement in which she thanked her fellow BOE members, Barlow administration and Dr. Pierson Ugol for a great working partnership. To the public she said she would like to see people think more of the collective and all students, rather than just your own student.

C. Graziano said that it was a true pleasure, honor and privilege to serve and work with Maureen Williams.

S. Lehberger thanked Maureen Williams for her service to the BOE.

K. O'Brien said that she has gotten to know Maureen Williams well over the last two years and that she will be sorely missed by all. K. O'Brien also said that T. Johnston has handled the last two years well and has kept us all going.

M. D'Agostino said that it's been an honor serving with Maureen Williams. He said that school lunches are free, and that he was at JBHS this morning and that the energy is there because Dr. Almeida is doing a great job.

M. Pampel thanked Maureen Williams for her time and that it's been amazing to serve with her. She said that Dr. Almeida has made a huge difference already in morale.

G. Denny said she echoes the comments from K. O'Brien, M. D'Agostino and M. Pampel and that she will miss Maureen Williams.

T. Johnston said that it's been a pleasure working with Maureen Williams and that he appreciates all the work that she's done.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, thanked M. Williams for her professionalism and thanked T. Johnston for all of his work. He said he would turn over the time to the other administrators as he had upcoming reports for later in the meeting.

Joel Barlow High School Head of School, Dr. Mario Almeida, said that the Barlow student body is amazing and that the energy at the recent pep rally was also amazing. He said that the pep rally was a much needed event for students and staff. Dr. Almeida recognized the PTSA for organizing many of the events of Spirit Week.

Director of Special Services, Michael DiStefano reported that: an ARP grant in the amount of \$35,306 had been received; an ESSER grant for recovering services for SpEd students had been awarded for the period of 2021-2023 for a total of \$59,000; that his staff will be working to transfer data over to the new IEP system from the State of Connecticut during the period of January-March 2022; the Bridge program currently has seven students; and that so far SpEd referrals are down from this time last year, from 18 to 4. M. D'Agostino said he commends M. DiStefano and his staff for all of their hard work. Dr. McKinnon said he'd like to circle back to the topic of referrals at a later date, wanting to investigate if interventions are up and if students are struggling in other areas.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, thanked M. Williams for her service to the BOE and said that she appreciated her wisdom. Dr. Pierson Ugol reported that the Region 9 Curriculum committee met to review the 10th grade Wellness curriculum that focuses on human sexuality. She said that the two student representatives to the Committee participated actively in the discussion and that BOE and community members, who were present, learned a great deal. No suggestions for revisions were made. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that the Region 9 website is being updated to include the work of the School Climate Committee. K. O'Brien said that she has an appreciation for the students who participated in the Curriculum Committee meeting, and that she is glad she participated.

Director of Finance & Operations, Scott Petruzzelli, reported that: he has transfers in the amount of \$10,518; he is wrapping up last year's financials; and that the open item is the health reserve fund. A discussion about the health reserve fund took place which included: the purpose of the fund; average monthly claims and how they compare to prior years; and how much to transfer to the fund. Personnel Manager, Vicki Cram, gave a historical perspective of the fund and how the fund is to function, by saying that some unspent funds are put into the health reserve fund every year as recommended by Brown & Brown. M. D'Agostino suggested that the discussion be continued at a future BOE meeting; Dr. McKinnon added that the decision does not need to be made tonight.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the transfer of unexpended funds in the amount of \$949,677.76 to the health reserve fund. (Graziano, O'Brien). Failed. 2-5-1 (O'Brien abstained).

M. D'Agostino said that we owe greater clarity to the public. Dr. McKinnon said that the Central Office will give a detailed presentation to the BOE with a complete analysis at the next available BOE meeting. S. Petruzzelli said that nothing in the Budget Object Summary report is sticking out as a concern to him. Dr. McKinnon said that they had just learned that one of the three wells is not working and that a lightning strike is the possible reason; repairs have been scheduled for the end of November.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: GRANT FOR FIRST ROBOTIC TEAM

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept a \$2,000 grant from RTX Raytheon for the robotics team with great appreciation. (D'Agostino, Denny). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add a new Agenda Item to consider an invoice for the bonding & permit fees for the JBHS cafeteria, gymnasium and HVAC safety & improvement project; the new Agenda Item will be Agenda Item B and all other Agenda Items will move down in order. (D'Agostino, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION OF INVOICE FOR BONDING & PERMITS FEES FOR JBHS CAFETERIA, GYMNASIUM AND HVAC SAFETY & IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

M. D'Agostino explained that he had been waiting for this invoice for the actual number; he reported that the invoice came in at \$16K under the original estimation.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve invoice number 1110-4 in the amount of \$24,972 from Millennial Construction for the bonding expenses for the JBHS cafeteria, gymnasium and HVAC safety & improvement project and authorize the Director of Finance to fund it from the Capital Reserve Fund. (D'Agostino, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

M. D'Agostino also reported that the only work left to be completed within the project are the gate openings in the bleachers and safety mats on the walls in the gymnasium; this work will be done during the Thanksgiving break. He said that once the school receives a COO from the Town of Redding, there will be one final invoice on which to vote.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: JBHS WATER SYSTEM DECONTAMINATION

Dr. McKinnon gave a presentation, complete with photos, on what he explained was a very strange accident where oil was delivered into the vent tube of the water storage tank. He said that: although all piping was affected, very little oil got into the water system; water is now bypassing pipes and going into temporary water tanks; the large storage tank has been cleaned, but is still empty; that there are water jugs throughout the school building, even though the piped water is potable; that the cost of this initial work, by Water System Solutions, is \$29,111; and that he had shared communications about the issue with staff and families all along the process and progress. Dr. McKinnon explained the three available options for a future permanent solution: A) use of existing equipment at \$10K; B) new piping, but use existing system at \$7.5K; or C) upgrade system at \$15K. It was agreed that the Facilities & Fields Committee will take up this issue. Dr. McKinnon also explained that the vendor has acknowledged the mistake and has taken full responsibility.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: REGION 9 FORENSIC AUDIT RFP VENDOR EVALUATION AND SELECTION

C. Graziano explained the process for finding the audit firm: four proposals were received, three were deemed eligible, two finalist firms were interviewed and one is now recommended for hire.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education appoint Nawrocki Smith to perform a forensic audit of Region 9 for an amount not to exceed \$26,000 with the final scope to be finalized between the Audit Committee and audit firm. (Graziano, D'Agostino). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS ATTORNEY/CLIENT PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION REGARDING BOILER CONTRACT

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education recess to Executive Session to discuss attorney/client privileged communication regarding boiler contract, and invite Dr. McKinnon and legal counsel to attend. (D'Agostino, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

The Region 9 Board of Education recessed to Executive Session at 9:47 p.m.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR POSSIBLE ACTION ON ITEM DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Region 9 Board of Education returned from Executive Session to Public Session at 11:44 p.m. No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

Submitted by Todd A. Johnston
Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by,
Sarah Ota