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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>

September 20, 2022 – 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Remote: Johnston

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Scrofani, Almeida

Others: 1 member of the public and the videographer

CALL TO ORDER

M. D'Agostino called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular to order at 7:38 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the August 16, 2022 Region 9 Board of Education Special Meeting meeting as submitted. (Denny, Pampel). Approved. 5-0-3. (Lehberger, Pampel, Thompson abstained).

AGENDA CHANGE

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Student Comment to the Agenda as the new Item III. (Denny, Pampel). Approved. Unanimous.

STUDENT COMMENT

Owen Fellows, JBHS Student Government Representative, read from the Noteworthy News report, with highlights including: Open House will be on September 22; there was one semi-finalist Wade Eubanks and 11 commended students for the National Merit Scholarship Program; there was a 9/11 Ceremony held on September 9 when the Peter Burton Hanson Award for Humanity was presented to senior student Quinn Speck; the Eco Club participated in the Save the Sound clean-up on September 10; the girls volleyball and boys football teams both won their season openers; and, head field hockey coach, Clara Ambrose, will compete for Team USA in the Field Hockey Masters World Cup in South Africa.

M. D'Agostino encouraged all parents to attend the Open House and said that they always find places for parents to park, whether it be one of the fields or the access road, etc. C. Graziano asked if there was a Zoom option for Open House and how parents who are unable to attend might receive information from Open House. Dr. Almeida replied that there was not a Zoom option and that parents can always contact their children's teachers and guidance counselors for information.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon first thanked the BOE members for attending the Opening Convocation and said that it was his goal to start school as normally as possible. He shared his presentation on Strategic Priorities for the District. He said that based – in part – on the conversations about “what does a graduate look like,” and “what does an ideal school look like,” that took place last Spring with students and community stakeholders, he will be presenting a further plan on strategic priorities that will include the ER9 values, quality of instruction, and priorities at the next Joint BOEs meeting in October. Dr. McKinnon said that there is enthusiasm in the hallways and at athletic events, and reminded all to follow the District’s Instagram account.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson-Ugol referenced her report to the BOE entitled, Summer Professional Learning and Curriculum Work Summary, and said that this summer marked a re-engagement with curriculum work and professional learning, something for which everyone has been asking. C. Graziano asked about who is the new STEM Department Chair. Dr. Pierson Ugol replied that it is Julie McTague. M. D’Agostino asked about any staffing issues. Dr. Almeida replied that we are fortunate that only full-time staff opening is currently posted for a math interventionist, as well as a few part-time long-term substitute positions. Dr. McKinnon said that in his presentation in October, there will be an overview of staffing. C. Graziano said that it would be helpful for her to understand staffing and staffing needs, especially for budget planning. Dr. McKinnon said that a staffing overview is also important when looking at student performance reports so that they can identify areas where teachers need support and resources to reach the student achievement goals.

Director of Finance, Operations & Technology, Sara Scrofani, reported that BOE approval was needed for a transfer of \$85,600 because of the dollar amount and that there was no financial impact to the district with the transfer; it is simply a reallocation of funds. She said the transfer is from account 563 to 330, and it is the result of student(s) previously identified for outplacement now being serviced at JBHS. K. Thompson asked how the costs associated with the two scenarios could be exactly the same. S. Scrofani said that at this time the costs are budget neutral because it’s a program change according to the Director of Special Services.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the transfer of \$85,600 from budget line 563 to budget line 330 for programmatic enhancements associated with servicing previously outplaced student(s) within the district. (Denny, Lehberger). Approved 7-0-1. (Thompson abstained.)

Joel Barlow Head of School, Dr. Mario Almeida, presented the BOE with a report from Director of Special Education Services, Tracy Hussey, on the school improvement strategy regarding SpEd. The report contained information on SpEd’s: CT SEDS update, family workshop offerings, tutoring annex, summer PD offerings for staff, and the return of Unified Sports.

S. Scrofani reported that the administration had met with the Audit Committee on September 9. Committee members were made aware the 2020-2021 end-of-year audit was filed with the state. She also provided an update of practice improvements which have been implemented based on recommendations from the forensic audit. She said she anticipates a timely submission of the 2021-2022 fiscal year audit. S. Scrofani said that the administration is recommending an adjustment of previous contributions to the health reserve to resolve the closeout of the 2021-2022 fiscal year. This recommendation is based on recent claim history and the current balance. She said that she is currently working with the Director of Human Resources to make sure that the salary lines are representative of the District’s hiring, and that they will provide a report at the October BOE meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: REVISION TO BLOCK SCHEDULE AND START OF SCHOOL UPDATE

Dr. Almeida reviewed with the BOE the new JBHS daily bell schedule which includes six periods with two periods being dropped/switched everyday; he said that advisory (40 min 1x week) and community minutes (13 min) remain in the daily schedule and that lunch had been extended in time from 20 to 30 minute but has been condensed into two lunch waves. Dr. Almeida said they got to this schedule by talking to neighboring districts, Barlow teachers going on high school visits pre-Covid, discussions with instructional leaders, and surveys with students and staff. He said that they also had three driving questions in determining a new schedule: how will a new schedule impact student learning? How will a new schedule impact classroom teachers? And, how do we schedule support for all students? Dr. Almeida said that the feedback he is getting is positive and that the 50 minutes for each class period has a good feel to it; it's not rushed and it's not too long. BOE members had questions and concerns that included: how has this schedule affects instructional time; what are the educational benefits; feedback that there is increased homework with more classes in the daily schedule; there had been a lot of negative feedback about the previous years block schedule. K. O'Brien asked about the issue of double study halls; is there an opportunity for students to take a class instead of an additional study hall; what else is available for students to do during double study halls. Dr. McKinnon said that they will provide the BOE with an overview of how the new schedule is enhancing student learning, the different research on the topic of schedules, the amount of homework, and the study hall issue. K. Thompson said that she has received feedback from many people that teachers are posting assignments after class has ended, late in the afternoon and evening, that are due the next day. She said that she has been told that students are constantly checking their google classrooms for assignments. S. Scrofani said that she will run analytics to see at what time of the day teachers are posting their assignments.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2021-2022 FISCAL YEAR CLOSE OUT

M. D'Agostino explained that after the close-out of the 2021-2022 fiscal year, staff presented additional invoices which were not included in those calculations. He said that these invoices were legitimate 2021-2022 expenses, however they were based on older contracts and purchase orders. M. D'Agostino said that S. Scrofani has implemented several safeguards and has had discussions with personnel to keep this from happening in the future. He said that the District needs to make a budget adjustment based on these expenditures. The administration has reviewed the health savings reserve and claims for the last couple of months, and has recommended that the end of year contribution to this account be adjusted.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education adjust its previously approved contribution to the Health Reserve by up to \$70,000 in order to resolve 2021-22 fiscal year expenses submitted by school personnel in August 2022. (Denny, Pampel). Approved. Unanimous.

***Note:** The Director of Finance, Operations, and Technology has implemented additional safeguards to school accounting practices. Also, additional training and an awareness of timing expectations has been given to staff in order to avoid recurrences moving forward.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION OF ASTRONOMY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TEXTBOOKS

Chair of the Curriculum Committee, M. Pampel, explained that new textbooks are needed for the Astronomy and Entrepreneurship classes; that 25 astronomy textbooks would be purchased and that 70 entrepreneurship textbooks would be purchased with a Perkins Supplemental Grant at no cost to the school. She said that at a meeting just prior to the BOE meeting, the Curriculum Committee moved to recommend the board approve the textbooks and that copies are available at the school for Board members and the public to view. M.

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D'Agostino said that according to the BOE's by-laws and state statute, new textbooks require a 2/3 vote of the Board and that notice of the changed textbook be given at least one week in advance of the Board vote, so a vote on the new textbooks will take place at the October meeting.

In accordance with Board Policy and CT Gen Stat 10-229 this notice serves to inform the public that consideration for approving new textbooks for Astronomy: Pathways to Astronomy and Entrepreneurship: OpenStax Entrepreneurship will be given at the next Region 9 Regular Board of Education Meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

S. Scrofani said that designating someone to be the social media manager will provide some legal protection and will designate who is the official spokesman for ER9. Dr. McKinnon said that procedures and expectations for school sponsored social media pages will be implemented and shared with all staff.

Motion: In accordance with Board Policy 9020, the Board acknowledges that communication is a concurrent responsibility of the Board and Superintendent. Therefore, in alignment with the Board's continuing commitment to community engagement, the Board authorizes the Superintendent to create and maintain social media accounts on behalf of the Region 9 School District and to delegate responsibility for these accounts in his discretion. (Denny, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

K. Thompson said that she was able to attend the Opening Convocation and that she thought it was an excellent event that was positive, energetic and enthusiastic. She said that it felt really great to be in the auditorium with the faculty and staff.

K. O'Brien said that she echoes this comment, and also that she went to the breakfast held before Convocation and that teachers were excited to be back. She said that she sat with teachers from Redding and they were thrilled to have Jennifer Desmairais as Principal of JRMS.

C. Graziano said thank you to all staff for their back-to-school efforts. She said thank you to Dr. McKinnon for the social media piece as it will get positive information about the schools out to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned. (Pampel, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

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

Recorded by,
Sarah Ota