

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING
Joel Barlow High School - Library Learning Commons
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September 19, 2023

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Graziano, Johnston, O'Brien, Denny, Lehberger, Pampel, Thompson
Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Almeida, Matz, Scrofani, D'Agostino
Others: 5 members of the public and staff, the Recording Secretary and the Videographer

CALL TO ORDER

C. Graziano called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the Minutes of the August 22, 2023 Special Meeting, with the following revisions: on page 1, M. Pampel's sentence of "Lots of construction and" should be removed; on page 2, paragraph 2, C. Graziano's incomplete sentence should be removed. (Pampel, Johnston). Approved. 6-0-1. (Denny abstained).

AGENDA CHANGE

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Student Report to the Agenda as the new Item V, and move down all other Agenda items. (Johnston, Denny). Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Shirley Melnick, Cricklewood Road, Redding, said she had a couple of questions. S. Melnick first said that she is wondering about the chronic absentee rate at JBHS as reported in the *Danbury News-Times*; this rate was reported as being much higher than that of Ridgefield High School's and questioned if Covid funds could have been used to address absenteeism issues. S. Melnick said that she is also wondering about the permitting of the paving of the Junior parking lot; if there is an overrun on the fields project; the expenditures to date of this project; and, if the lights are to be installed in front of her house, this is a problem for her.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

STUDENT REPORT

Joel Barlow High School Student Government Representative, Owen Fellows, read from the prepared report *Noteworthy News*, highlights included: Open House is scheduled for September 21; there are three semi-finalists and five commended Barlow students in the National Merit Scholarship Program; the Peter

Burton Hanson Memorial Award for Humanity recipient this year is Jackson Hrebin; the Athletic Department has been selected as a 2022-2023 CIAC Michael's Cup recipient; Audrey Gil set a school record in 200 IM at the September 12th swim meet; and, there are currently 269 students participating in Fall sports.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, welcomed everyone and said that the start to the school year has been a great success.

Joel Barlow Head of School, Dr. Mario Almeida, reported on the status of the Academic Centers, saying that there are 20+ 9th Grade students that have been identified as needing additional support and have been pre-scheduled for time slots in the academic centers; many other students are utilizing them in preparation for a test or quiz; ILs from all the departments are also helping to staff the Centers; and, so far everything in the Learning Centers seem to be running well.

Dr. McKinnon introduced the new Director of Pre-K-12 Special Education, Katherine Matz. Ms. Matz said that there had been several new staff hires at Barlow, but that there has been a smooth transition into the new school year. She introduced the new Region 9 Special Education Supervisor, Nicole Fennich, who said that she felt immediately at home and that she looks forward to working with everyone.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, reported on the District's summer professional development session on the new teacher evaluation process, saying that this new system: will be piloted in the 2023-2024 school year; consists of informal feedback and narrative support that is tied to core academic indicators; and, is consistent with recently released guidelines from the CT State Department of Education. Dr. Pierson Ugol also reported on the summer work on the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) which, she said, has been renamed from SRBI; she said the summer work focused on developing common communication across District platforms, as well as goals for 2023-2024. Dr. Pierson Ugol was asked about curriculum revision; she replied that she would report fully on this topic at the next Curriculum Committee meeting, and said that revisions were minor. Dr. McKinnon added that he and Dr. Pierson Ugol have been presenting the new evaluation process at staff meetings. Board members inquired as to who is entering the classrooms to conduct the teacher evaluations. Dr. Pierson Ugol replied that it is basically the same team as it has been – department ILs and school administrators – and that teachers and evaluators have been quite receptive to the process. Dr. McKinnon said that they have been looking into the chronic absenteeism rate and how the data is coded tardy vs. absent.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2022-2023 FISCAL YEAR CLOSE OUT

Director of Finance, Operations & Technology, Sara Scrofani, reported that there are still some invoices outstanding because: some technology equipment has not yet arrived due to manufacturing shortages; she is working to finalize transportation costs; there are still facility projects going on; and, there are still some auditing and legal invoices that have not yet arrived. She said that she expects all of this to be finalized within the next couple of weeks.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: START OF SCHOOL UPDATE

Dr. McKinnon said that there was a successful school opening and that the students seemed excited to be back. He said that a survey of the school community brought in 691 responses, with responses to the question about how the first day went as follows: 48% excellent; 42% very good; 6.5% fair; and, 2% hoping for better days. Dr. McKinnon also encouraged all to follow the District on Instagram for up to date news on school events and sports. Dr. McKinnon thanked all the people in Central Office, as well as all the administrators and school support staff who work hard year-round to make sure that our schools run as smoothly as possible. He was pleased to report that he had seen the new gym and workout room being completely utilized as well as the new turf field used by several teams simultaneously. Dr. Almeida said that September is a great month for educators after having had a quiet summer; he also said he wanted to give a shout-out to the bus drivers and bus company for doing such a great job. BOE members had several questions, including: were the Freshmen orientation events helpful; was there enough funding for the new events; how is the Bridges program; can we get numbers & data on Bridges and SpEd; and who is doing the work of the ESL teacher. Dr. Almeida and K. Matz provided responses of: the orientation events were helpful and one is planned for the current 8th graders this October; there is really not a lot of funding required for these events; the Bridges program has two rooms this year, one for academics and one for students needing different supports; numbers & data on Bridges and SpEd will be provided at a future meeting; and, ESL is part of one of the Spanish teacher's responsibilities.

K. Thompson thanked Dr. McKinnon for a great Convocation and that it conveyed a great message. C. Graziano said that Convocation was very motivating and provided a clear and positive message.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION AND BOARD OF EDUCATION REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT #9, 7-1-23 THROUGH 6-30-2027

C. Graziano said that this Agenda Item has been tabled until the next BOE meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PERMITTING FOR NEST PROJECT AND UPDATE

C. Graziano said that she and G. Denny had attended the recent Redding Board of Selectmen meeting as private citizens. She said that the BOS agreed to extend the ARPA funding deadline for the NEST project by one month. G. Denny said that she had had an informal conversation with a Department of Environmental Protection contact about the NEST bathroom sewage/waste water and that this person identified the following four options: continued use of portolettes; use composting toilets; connect to the existing system (which involves pumping waste water almost half a mile uphill); or, installation of a permanent sub service station. She said they were not in favor of any of these options because there is no permanent hand washing area and all of these options are non-ADA compliant; pumping waste water uphill has potential for problems and isn't environmentally sound; and installing another substation treatment area is more than is needed for one bathroom. G. Denny said that their preference is to install a solid wastewater holding tank that would be pumped and emptied periodically, but that the DEP cannot issue a permit for this in our current circumstance. Facilities Manager, Mike D'Agostino, explained that the DEP does not have the authority to issue a permit for a wastewater holding tank as a primary solution, but that it has to be a remedial solution. He said the Town of Redding would have to apply for a waiver from the state DEP for a permanent holding tank. BOE members had questions regarding: from what material the tank is made; is it an in-ground tank; how often is the tank pumped; how do we know where the most appropriate spot is for the tank; can we move the location of the bathrooms; cost of a treatment plant in case we need to utilize that option; how realistic is it that the DEP will step aside. M. D'Agostino and G. Denny replied: the tank is made of a plastic/fiberglass/resin material; the tank is fully underground; frequency of pumping depends on size of tank; tank will be placed in a logical spot near the building; location of bathrooms can be moved; cost of a treatment plant would exceed the cost of the entire building; and, not sure if it will be successful but it is definitely worth pursuing the waiver option.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education authorize G. Denny to communicate, on behalf of the Region 9 BOE, with the Department of Environmental Protection the options for waste water disposal within the JBHS Fields Project. (Pampel, Thompson). Approved. Unanimous.

Dr. McKinnon and M. D'Agostino said that an RFP for design services for the building will be initiated, without the wastewater component, but that it will take longer than a month to receive some pricing.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION FOR APPROVAL OF INVOICES

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve application #6 in the amount of \$143,199.59 as a progress payment to Millenium Builders for the Upper Gym Project, and to authorize the Director of Finance to pay with funds from the Capital Fund. (Johnston, Thompson). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve invoice #70443 in the amount of \$988,753.50 as a progress payment to Field Turf USA, Inc. for the JBHS Fields Project, and to authorize the Director of Finance to pay with funds from the Capital Fund. (Johnston, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

A discussion took place about the possibility of a change order that includes eliminating the paving of the Junior parking lot and paving of the driveway and parking lot, and instead, chip seal and fix the curbing at the stadium parking lot. It was decided to have a Facilities Committee meeting at the parking lots and then decide on the change order at the next BOE meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CAPITAL PLAN

M. D'Agostino explained the status of two Capital Plan projects and their need for additional funding, and shared photos of the two projects. He said that when the roofing was removed from the maintenance garage during the re-roofing project, it was discovered that a steel support beam had rotted and it now needs to be replaced. He said that the new projector in the auditorium works very well, but that the current screen is not big enough for it.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education add the Auditorium Project to the Capital Plan for the remaining \$14,050 for a screen. (Denny, Johnston). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education amend the Capital Plan to reflect the needed structural repairs to the Outbuilding Roofing Project in the amount of \$7,682. (Denny, Johnston). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education authorize the Director of Finance to fund the Auditorium Projector Project in the amount of \$14,050 for the screen from the Capital Fund, also the additional \$7,682 for the Outbuilding Roofing Project also from the Capital Fund. (Denny, Johnston). Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

K. Thompson said that now that the SAT and CT State testing scores have been released, she looks forward to a presentation about them.

C. Graziano welcomed everyone back to school.

ADJOURNMENT

K. O'Brien made a Motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by K. Thompson. Hearing no objections, C. Graziano adjourned the Region 9 Board of Education regular meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

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

Recorded by Sarah Ota