

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

Joel Barlow High School - Library Learning Commons

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February 12, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Johnston, Graziano, Parkin, Denny (arrived at 7:11 p.m.), O'Brien, Pampel, Stinson

Absent: Thompson

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Almeida, Matz, Scrofani, D'Agostino

CALL TO ORDER

T. Johnston called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education adopt the Minutes from the ER9 Joint Boards of Education Regular Meeting of January 23, 2024 and the Region 9 Board of Education Regular Meeting of January 30, 2024, subject to the amendments discussed tonight. For the January 23 meeting: on page 6, A. Guarniere's name is misspelled. For the January 30 meeting: the Motion on page 3, T. Johnson and K. Thompson dissented in the vote; and, G. Denny was not absent, she was in attendance and departed early from the meeting. (Parkin, Stinson). Approved. 6-0.

STUDENT COMMENT

Joel Barlow High School Student Government Representative, Owen Fellows, read from the prepared report *Noteworthy News*, highlights included: the final round of Poetry Out Loud was held January 26, with Maansi Tiberwal advancing to the regional competition; the JBHS Red Cross Club held their first ever blood drive on February 6 and 37 units of blood were collected; Kate Krug, Em Ploss, Grace Raymond, and Sassy Wood were selected to participate in the CT Music Educators Association All-State Music Festival on April 4-6; the Guidance Department is hosting "Finding Your Best Fit College" tonight; March 18 is the 10th annual St. Baldrick's "Brave the Shave" event; on February 3, the Debate Team placed 1st in novice and 2nd in varsity; Mi-Hyun Dechavanne, Duncan Martin, and Millie Krausche were selected for the CT Scholastic Art Show; the indoor track team won the SWC championship in the 4x200 relay and the pole vault; Jordan Carr was named HOKA Athlete of the Week for Indoor Track & Field.

PUBLIC COMMENT : None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT: None.

T. Johnston said that Agenda Item VII. C., Retirement Plan Investment Policy Statement, needed to be removed from the agenda as he wanted the District's legal counsel to review it and that Item VII. E. should be moved to its place in the agenda. C. Parkin made a motion that was seconded by C. Graziano, but it was pointed out that no motion was needed since the meeting was a Special Meeting; the change was able to be made at the Chair's discretion.

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DEBORAH SZEGEDI TOWN CLERK EASTON CT

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon noted that as the 2024-2025 budget was being presented, there were no administrative reports.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: REGION 9 COMMITTEE CHARGES

C. Parkin presented draft committee charges for Region 9 Board of Education review. The Board collectively made edits.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the charges as presented for the Curriculum Committee and the Finance & Operations Committee. (Denny, Graziano). Approved. 7-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPOINTMENTS TO REGION 9 & ER9 JOINT COMMITTEES

T. Johnston presented committee appointments, noting that he put much thought into it. A discussion ensued regarding balance between Easton/Redding on committees, voting vs. advisory members of committees, and staff members to be included on committees.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL OF 2024-2025 SCHOOL CALENDAR

C. Parkin reported that the 2025-2026 calendar is under discussion and a recommendation will be presented to the Region 9 Board of Education in May.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept the recommendation of the Joint Finance & Operations Committee and adopt the 2024-2025 school year calendar as recommended. (Parkin, Stinson). Approved. 7-0.

T. Johnston asked that the calendar be posted on the District's website.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2024-2025 REGION 9 OPERATING BUDGET PRESENTATION

Dr. McKinnon said that JBHS is an innovative and welcoming community with a passion for developing intellectual, physical, and social and emotional assets in all learners and thanked BOE members, faculty and staff for their commitment to education. He said viewers of tonight's presentation could scan the QR code throughout the meeting to submit a question about the budget.

1) Budget Process & Introduction: Dr. McKinnon explained that the budget changed from a budget object model to a cost center model three years ago and that in doing so, over 400 accounts were organized into six cost centers: School, Special Education, Facilities, Technology, Districtwide Curriculum and Instruction, and Central Office. Dr. McKinnon said that budget drivers such as health insurance, Special Education, utilities, and transportation are pushing budget increases higher and higher and crowding out student improvement initiatives. He said we are committed to quality and fiscal awareness.

2) Strategic Priorities: Dr. McKinnon said the budget is based on strategic priorities and that it is important to craft actionable priorities that improve student achievement and guide allocation of resources. He then reviewed the six broad priority areas of the Region 9 Strategic Plan.

3) Budget Drivers: Dr. McKinnon said that the typical budget drivers such as Special Education, transportation, medical insurance, and contractual increases were less evident in the 2023-24 JBHS budget

and that declining bond principle interest payments over the past five years largely offset increases in the Special Education budget. He noted that the recently negotiated JBEA contract for next year includes market adjustments for Administrative staff and wage increases for teachers.

4) Enrollment, Staff Changes & Grants: Dr. McKinnon reviewed historical enrollment, saying projected enrollment will dip slightly for the next 2-3 years, then increase to 870 by 2033. He said that current enrollment is 737, which includes ten non-resident students, seven of whom are Open Choice students; apportionment is based on enrollment of 727, with 384 students from Easton – or 52.8% – and 343 students from Redding – or 47.2%. Dr. McKinnon said grants will offset some of the Operating budget in 2024-2025 (~\$51K). He said proposed staff changes reflect lower student enrollment and include a decrease of 3.4 FTE in non-certified staff (-4.0 FTE and +.6 FTE Board Certified Behavior Analyst) and 3.03 FTE in certified staff, in line with decreased student population. Dr. McKinnon noted that language offerings need to be discussed at a future meeting, including whether a third language should be offered and what it might be. Dr. McKinnon presented Special Education Department reorganization chart.

5) Cost Centers: Athletics proposed budget is \$1,055,210 (+4.16% increase); JBHS proposed budget is \$10,653,878 (+3.18% increase); Districtwide proposed budget is \$6,281,272.91 (-0.21% decrease); Special Education Pupil Personnel Services proposed budget is \$5,215,887.87 (+1.94% increase); Facilities proposed budget is \$813,296.14 (+4.4% increase); Technology proposed budget is \$563,776.05 (+6.4% increase); Curriculum & Instruction proposed budget is \$37,745 (+85.38% increase); Region 9 share of Central Office approved budget is \$756,651.00 (+3.3% increase).

6) Budget Summary: The percentage of each cost center within overall proposed budget is: Athletics, 4.1%; JBHS, 41.6%; Districtwide 25.4%; Special Education Pupil Personnel Services, 20.6%; Facilities, 3.1%; Technology, 2.1%; Curriculum & Instruction, 0.1%; Central Office, 3.0%. The Superintendent proposed total 2024-2025 Region 9 budget is \$25,377,717, an increase of \$566,350, or 2.28%. The apportionment for Easton is 52.82% of student population (\$13,404,461) and 47.18% of student population for Redding (11,973,256).

7) Next Steps: Dr. McKinnon said that S. Scrofani has developed a budget site that includes a public-facing Google sheet for input. He said that community engagement is a continuing effort and goal. Dr. McKinnon thanked school leadership team and Central Office staff in preparing the budget, and teachers and staff for their unwavering dedication to students.

T. Johnston asked BOE members for clarifying, directional questions. Board member feedback included: Budget should tie to strategic priorities – what investment is recommended to address this? Can any spending against Year 3 priorities be pulled forward to avoid large budget increases in future years? Can we see actual historical spending growth, which has been masked by declining debt? In what strategic direction should we be going and how do we move forward? What part of whole budget are we investing in moving forward, and how can we plan over two years? Can we see a strategic shift of funds into the classroom vs. outside of classroom? Why are grade level cohorts losing students year over year; why are students leaving? What is budgetary impact of removing Art I as prerequisite for some art courses? Can we review World Language program curriculum, including Latin and possible replacement language? Dr. McKinnon said STEM investments were not included in this budget because they need to define pathways and investigate facility changes that would need to occur. He said BOE members should submit additional questions via Google sheet shared with them.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

C. Parkin made a motion for adjournment, seconded by J. Stinson. Hearing no objections, T. Johnston adjourned the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04p.m.

Submitted by Kathy Thompson
Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by,
Sarah Ota