

BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: June 17, 2020 LOCATION: Branford High School Lower Media Center
185 East Main Street, Branford, CT
SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting Page 1 of 5

ATTENDANCE

HERE	ATTENDEE	AFFILIATION
Y	Shannen Sharkey, Chair	Board of Education
Y	John R. Prins, Vice-Chair	Board of Education
Y	Joanne Borrus	Board of Education
Y	Cristina Cantu	Board of Education
Y	Chad Edgar	Board of Education
Y	Maria Ehrhardt	Board of Education
Y	Meredith Gaffney	Board of Education
Y	Ellen Michaels	Board of Education
Y	Dawn Perrotti	Board of Education
N	Riyanshu (Riya) Bam	Student Representative
N	Mia Josephy-Zack	Student Representative
N	Minsok Lee	Student Representative
Y	Hamlet M. Hernandez, Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Rachel Sexton, Assistant Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Don Neel, Chief Operating Officer	Central Office
N	Charles Cicarella, Director Student Services	Central Office

Others present:

BUSINESS ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTION

This meeting was conducted remotely in accordance with State of Connecticut Executive Order No. 7b, issued by His Excellency Ned Lamont

CALL TO ORDER

01 Meeting was called to order at 6:07 PM by BOE Chair, Shannen Sharkey.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nancy Kendrick, District parent, discussed the updated CIAC guidelines and questioned when BPS athletics would begin.

Kim Iagrossi, District parent, discussed the BHS Cheer Team's vacant coaches position and the need to fill the vacancy for team leadership, fundraising and recruitment.

Jim May, BHS coach, discussed not having received his coaching contract. Mr. May also thanked the Board for all they do.

Isabel Bysiewicz, BHS graduate, spoke about her experience as a Branford Public Schools (BPS) student and a petition that is circulating to promote racial equity and diversity in education for Branford students.

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DATE: June 17, 2020 LOCATION: Branford High School Lower Media Center
185 East Main Street, Branford, CT
SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting Page 2 of 5

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Continued)

Steve Malfronte, BHS coach, spoke about not receiving any communication regarding his contract, his desire for more communication in the future and also the amount of time that it takes to coach a team.

Jack Nelson, BHS graduate, spoke about his experience as a BPS student, his experience as a college student, creating a positive atmosphere for all BPS students, the need to speak about racial history and injustices moving forward. He stated that he was disappointed with the Board for not immediately addressing these issues.

Mia, BHS graduate, spoke about her experience as a BPS student, “things that she needs to unlearn” as a student at Yale University. Mia stated that she was dismayed and disappointed that the BOE did not immediately address the issues.

Max Fillion, former BPS student, stated that he was looking forward to engaging the Board further on issues of education, racial equity and other topics of diversity equity and inclusion.

Hailey Brown, BHS graduate, voiced her concerns about Spring coaches not getting paid their stipends, having no communication regarding their coaching contracts and the work involved with getting ready for and during the season.

Rassi Bysiewicz, BHS graduate, spoke about and read the demands of her sister, Isabel Bysiewicz’s petition.

Casey Franco-Camacho, due to technical difficulties Casey was unable be heard so Jack Nelson read a statement and spoke on behalf of Casey. He stated that Casey is working on a project to raised funds for books that present identify and race awareness. Casey was subsequently able to call in to the meeting and reiterated everything that Jack said on her behalf.

Alexa Bodner, BHS graduate, spoke about her feelings on the issue of racism and racial inequality in the BPS system, her experience as a BPS student and her support for the work started by Isabel Bysiewicz.

Marshall Borrus, BHS graduate, stated his support for the petition, reform for BPS curriculum to include antiracist work and work by people of more color and his current experience in higher education.

Gillian Bascilicato, BHS graduate, stated that she was involved in organizing the BLM protest on the green. She also discussed her work with the Director of Trinity Church and the Branford Rotary Organization.

Lilly Kirby, BHS graduate, said that she wanted to reiterate comments made earlier to emphasize anti-racism. Lilly stated that she hoped that curriculum would change to include training to support students of color.

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BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: June 17, 2020 LOCATION: Branford High School Lower Media Center
185 East Main Street, Branford, CT
SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting Page 3 of 5

APPROVE MINUTES

- 01** MOTION (Gaffney/Michaels) to approve the minutes from the May 14, 2020 Full Special BOE Meeting.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

- 02** MOTION (Gaffney/Michaels) to approve the minutes from the May 20, 2020 Full Regular BOE Meeting.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

COMMUNICATION

Ms. Sharkey, reported that she, the Board and Administrators have received numerous emails from community members, students and alumni, full of passion and excitement. Ms. Sharkey stated that the Board will address these comments at the BOE Retreat and will continue to have conversations over the summer. Ms. Sharkey also reported that she, Superintendent Hernandez and Mr. Panagoulis will be speaking tomorrow with the individuals who have sent emails.

BOE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

There were no student representatives present at this evening's meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT/WIS PROJECT UPDATE

Don Neel, presented the monthly expenditures report. He stated that the Special Education fund is 86.9% committed, the General Operations fund is 88.5% committed for a consolidated commitment of 88.2%. Mr. Neel reported that "there are still many significant things in flux." He gave an example of the biggest one being transportation and stated that we have released the normal encumbrances for First Student and have reached an agreement to pay them for actual expenses. Mr. Neel concluded by saying that we continue to be in good shape and I anticipate returning more residual monies to the Town than we normally do.

In the absence of Charles Cicarella, Mr. Neel presented that Tuition and Transportation Report. He reported on tuition first and stated that from a budget of 2.423 million dollars we are projecting a tuition balance of \$58,009 which is a decrease of about \$20,000 from the last report and well within the normal fluctuation. Mr. Neel reported that the transportation budget is \$764,776 and since the bulk of the providers are not First Student these expenses are an actual known number and we do not anticipate paying anything more than that.

Mr. Neel concluded by discussing the Personnel Report. He stated that Talent Services has been busy, open enrollment is complete and with graduation now over we are quickly turning our attention to the new fiscal year.

Superintendent Hernandez began his report by thanking all of the speakers who spoke publically this evening. He stated that he wanted to reassure the public that we are keenly aware of the national and

Continued...

BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: June 17, 2020 LOCATION: Branford High School Lower Media Center
185 East Main Street, Branford, CT
SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting Page 4 of 5

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT/WIS PROJECT UPDATE (Continued)

local issues and there is always room to improve how we educate our children, particularly around racism injustice and acceptance. Mr. Hernandez stated that he is happy to hear that the students were willing to come forward and speak about their experiences. He continued by saying that he has lived these experiences for all of his life, as has the Assistant Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer. We always welcome comments and look forward to improve. He stated that change can be difficult but in order to change we need to hear difficult things.

Superintendent Hernandez stated that one of the difficult things that we face this year was mentioned by our first speaker. The CIAC issued guidance relative to how summer activities would be directed. Mr. Hernandez reported that he met with the CIAC's Executive Director so that he could speak with him about the guidance. Mr. Hernandez stated that this is a complex issue, we have issued guidance to the Athletic Director's and hopefully they conveyed this information to current coaches. We can appreciate everyone's sense of urgency and need to get our students out on the field doing activities and we share their concerns.

Superintendent Hernandez reported that the high school graduation was a success. Mr. Panagoulis, his team and the Board of Education participated and it was truly extraordinary for students in this environment to still be able to celebrate with their family while practicing precautions. Mr. Hernandez stated that 80 students participated. The second graduation is August 3rd, and our hope is that restrictions will be alleviated so we can have more participation. As a reminder, Mr. Hernandez reported that the celebration will happen on high school grounds and there will be more information to come.

Superintendent Hernandez also discussed the WIS Step-up Day. He stated that the car parade celebration was very successful. It was a true celebration of kids and families. Mr. Hernandez also discussed the grade 4 celebration. He stated that the individual celebrations took place by class in the schools parking lot. He concluded by saying it all went very well.

Superintendent Hernandez reported that we are starting to pivot toward reopening. An Ad Hoc Committee will be convened. He stated that we will be starting to place phone calls to committee members. Mr. Hernandez stated that he has received a list of parents to participate and he will be reaching out to the parents personally. He stated that we plan to meet several times over the summer. The Committee will break down into focus groups and will advise the Board as to what we see as a reopening in the fall. He concluded by saying we have a very busy summer ahead of us.

Superintendent Hernandez discussed the Summer Meals Program. He stated that it has already started and since the COVID-19 Meals Program it has not missed a beat. Superintendent Hernandez also reported that we will be working with The Y for their summer camps.

Superintendent Hernandez concluded his report by stating that this week we focused on personnel. Soon we will see positions being posted. Although we lost three positions we will see movement on reassignments and we are in a good place. Despite losing FTE's no one lost their jobs. We have worked hard to maintain certified staff, noncertified staff and paraprofessional positions. Mr. Hernandez stated that reasonable assurance letters have been sent out to the Para's.

Continued...

BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: June 17, 2020 LOCATION: Branford High School Lower Media Center
185 East Main Street, Branford, CT
SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting Page 5 of 5

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Isabel Bysiewicz, BHS graduate, inquired as to what would be the best way to contact BOE members and Superintendent Hernandez.

BOARD REPORTS:

ACES – Ellen Michaels discussed the last ACES meeting that she attended which was in May. She stated that ACES Director's contract was renewed for another year and that ACES has sent a representative to the State for guidance on reopening.

BECC – Dawn Perrotti stated that the BECC has been very active supporting programs. Ms. Perrotti also read a statement from Robin Comey.

CABE – John Prins reported that CABE has been extraordinarily busy supporting BOE's across the state with information surrounding the complex reopening process. The convention committee is looking into other ways to do things in November. The Finance Committee passed their budget and also reviewed the evaluation of the Executive Director and approved the extension of his salary for another year. The Board Chair check-in is tomorrow and the Education Commissioner will be participating and answering pre-submitted questions.

ADJOURN

03 MOTION (Prins/Gaffney) to adjourn.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Sharkey adjourned the meeting 7:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Meredith Gaffney
Secretary

Prepared by,
Kerry Erich