

BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: November 18, 2020

LOCATION: Walsh Intermediate School Cafeteria
185 Damascus Road, Branford, CT 06405

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

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ATTENDANCE

HERE	ATTENDEE	AFFILIATION
Y	John R. Prins, Chair	Board of Education
Y	Peter Berdon	Board of Education
Y	Joanne Borrus	Board of Education
Y	Cristina Cantu	Board of Education
Y	Chad Edgar	Board of Education
Y	Meredith Gaffney	Board of Education
Y	Ellen Michaels	Board of Education
Y	Dawn Perrotti	Board of Education
Y	Dr. Tim Raynor	Board of Education
Y	Hamlet M. Hernandez, Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Rachel Sexton, Assistant Superintendent	Central Office
N	Don Neel, Chief Operating Officer	Central Office

Others present: Matthew Byrnes-Jacobsen, Colliers International; Colin Chan, Fusco Corporation; Michael LoSasso, Antinozzi Associates; Michael Pascucilla, East Shore Department of Public Health and Dr. Richard Young, School Physician

BUSINESS ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTION

CALL TO ORDER

01 Meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM by BOE Chair, John Prins.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Michelle Tripp, District parent, thanked teachers for the amazing job that they were doing. Ms. Trip discussed PSAT testing for students who are virtual learners. Ms. Trip also asked about assessment access for virtual learners?

Becky DeAngelo, District resident, spoke about PSAT access for remote learners and asked if other assessments will be available to remote learners.

Laura Green, District parent and employee, thanked the BOE and Superintendent for not closing the schools down. Mrs. Green also asked if it was possible to allow children to attend school all four days?

Derek Green, District parent, discussed communication, posting agendas and live streaming. He also stated that the school system was doing a great job by not closing down.

Gregg Jerolman, District parent, spoke about District and Board leadership.

APPROVE MINUTES

02 MOTION (Michaels/Gaffney) to approve the minutes from the February 19, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting.

APPROVED (Berdon and Raynor abstained)

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MINUTES (Continued)

- 03** MOTION (Borrus/Gaffney) to approve the minutes from the minutes from the March 11, 2020 Communication Committee Meeting.
APPROVED (Michaels, Berdon and Raybor abstained)
- 04** MOTION (Perrotti/Borrus) to approve the minutes from the March 11, 2020 Personnel & Finance Committee Meeting.
APPROVED (Berdon and Raynor abstained)
- 05** MOTION (Perrotti/Borrus) to approve the minutes from the March 11, 2020 Teaching & Learning Committee Meeting.
APPROVED (Berdon and Raynor abstained)
- 06** MOTION (Borrus/Perrotti) to approve the minutes from the October 21, 2020 Full Special BOE Meeting.
APPROVED (Berdon and Raynor abstained)
- 07** MOTION (Perrotti/Borrus) to approve the minutes from the October 21, 2020 Full Regular BOE Meeting.
APPROVED (Berdon and Raynor abstained)
- 08** MOTION (Perrotti/Borrus) to approve the minutes from the October 22, 2020 Full Special BOE Meeting.
APPROVED (Berdon and Raynor abstained)

COMMUNICATION

Mr. Prins discussed how the Board has heard about and witnessed the extraordinary work done by District teachers. Mr. Prins spoke about public comment in committees. He stated that “if an answer can be done briefly it will be provided, if not we will let the public know.”

INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOE MEMBERS

Mr. Prins welcomed and introduced the newest BOE members, Peter Berdon and Tim Raynor.

PRESENTATION

A. WIS Project Owner, Architects and Contractors (OAC) Update

Members of the OAC Team, Matt Byrnes-Jacobsen, Colin Chan, and Michael LoSasso, gave an update on the WIS Project. Among the items that they discussed were; timeline and logistics, space usage, completion of Phase 1 (Addition), Phase 2 work including progress of Common Spaces, abatement and demolition (Southern building), abatement and selective repairs (existing school), constructive progress (existing school), Auditorium construction progress (existing school), construction of the South Parking Lot, Common Spaces, Main Entry and Lobby, the Auditorium, the Natatorium including infrastructure, the Gymnasiums, and the site plan.

B. East Shore Health Department (ESHD) COVID-19 Update

Michael Pascucilla, ESHD Health Director, provided a COVID-19 update. Mr. Pascucilla thanked the BPS District Team for its full disclosure. Mr. Pascucilla stated that Public Health and BPS are actively working each and every day to keep schools open and the communication has been seamless. There are a series of meeting and

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PRESENTATION (Continued)

we connect every single day (7 days a week). Since the beginning of the pandemic each week there is a standing meeting with the District Leadership Team Incident Command System (ICS) to review Federal and State COVID-19 guidelines at this meeting we look at State data for trends. Although there have been many focuses, the two main focuses are nursing homes/assisted living and schools. Our schools are safe havens for our children and working environment for its faculty. Education is only one component, it meets the social/emotion, nutritional and physical needs of our youth. The whole child's wellness. If schools were not safe they would not be open. The State Department issued a memo that schools should be open and have made it a priority to remain open. Mr. Pascucilla stated that we have been planning for a pandemic for many years and since the beginning of summer working with schools for a reopening plan, refining it for the hybrid model. As a community we are well prepared utilizing every resource available to control the virus. When discussing why schools should stay open Mr. Pascucilla reviewed the process once a positive case is confirmed (contact tracing, isolation vs. quarantine. Quarantine is one of the most powerful tools and the safe guards are working very well. Mr. Pascucilla completed his presentation by saying to be brutally honest, as local and school officials, we are doing everything we possibly can to control this virus but we can't do it alone we need your help. With Thanksgiving coming up it has to look a little different this year - please rethink your plans and follow the COVID-19 safety rules.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT/WIS PROJECT UPDATE

Superintendent Hernandez began his report by discussing public service announcements and information boards that include information regarding hand hygiene, mask wearing and social distancing. In his last update to parents/guardians Mr. Hernandez included a hyperlink to the State's travel restrictions.

Superintendent Hernandez also reported that as of today and since March the District has served 81,000 meals. This school year alone the District has served 40,000 meals. Mr. Hernandez stated that the food service has done an amazing job.

Superintendent Hernandez stated that he also wanted to pick-up on the accolades that are well deserved by the teachers and administrative team but also behind them there is a faculty of support staff, custodians, nurses and bus drivers. Everyone is doing their part and in turn making the hybrid plan sustainable. Mr. Hernandez stated that he cannot say enough about the staff, this is truly a team effort and really important. Today a flu clinic was held sponsored by School Based Health Clinic in partnership with East Shore Health and nurses. The Clinic also held an enrollment for their services. Mr. Hernandez stated we had approximately 40 folks come and receive their vaccination.

Superintendent Hernandez addressed some of the public comments that were made earlier in the night. He addressed where to find BOE agenda's (District website and Town website) and he also stated that because this BOE meeting was so important an email was sent out to families regarding the meeting including information where to find agendas. Mr. Hernandez stated that different devices may access this information differently. Mr. Berdon also pointed out that you can sign up for alerts on the Town's website.

Addressing the comments on PSAT's and Assessments Superintendent Hernandez stated that early on we received guidance from the State Department and there were unintended consequences. Mr.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT (Continued)

Hernandez stated that we will take another look at that in the Spring. He understands the disappointment and by way of history PSAT's a few years ago were not paid for by the District, but that changed after looking at the District demographics and it was something we wanted for every student.

Superintendent Hernandez continued his report by discussing a point that was driven home via communication this past Monday to parents regarding going to the distance learning model and advance notice. In the correspondence Mr. Hernandez referenced the State and DPH guidance that District's should just not arbitrarily decide to go to fully remote and that Districts should look at variety of data points. Mr. Hernandez reiterated his previous statement that there may be a strong possibility that we may have to close a school due to staffing shortages, but he was pleased to report that we have not had to close any schools, but did have to put a grade in remote.

Superintendent Hernandez concluded his report by stating that the concept came up this evening for us being a little bit more nimble allowing kids to come in and out of remote. He stated we are much more nimble when a child goes to full remote as opposed to the opposite. With reasons being, needing to look at the cohort and preserving mitigation measures (distance numbers in classrooms). All of these measures have strongly contributed to us staying in this model.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

09 A. 2021 BOE Meeting Schedule

MOTION (Michaels/Edgar) to approve the 2021 BOE Meeting Schedule.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

10 B. Standard Orders Policy and Procedures Revisions

Dr. Richard Young discussed revisions to the standing orders.

MOTION (Berdon/Gaffney) to approve the revision to the standing orders.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ACTION ITEMS

There were no public comments made.

BOARD REPORTS

- A. ACES – Ellen Michaels stated that at the last ACES meeting it was discussed how most of the Districts associated with ACES are having difficulties with staff shortages. Ms. Michaels also reported that students are still attending school while waiting for their results to come back and then testing positive, causing school closures. Ms. Michaels also stated that the rates for next year have been approved with a modest increase. However, there will be no increase in related services.
- B. BECC – Meredith Gaffney reported that BECC conducted their annual review of programs, they are working with providing COVID support to providers in the area and they will be sending out three surveys to families, providers and businesses in the area.

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BOARD REPORTS (Continued)

- C. C.A.B.E. – John Prins discussed the key functions of C.A.B.E., including the Delegate Assembly which is a precursor to the Annual Convention. One of the proposed resolutions that the Assembly is working on is creating educational excellence through economic racial and ethnic integration. Mr. Prins also discussed professional development opportunities for all BOE members.

STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. Communication Committee (Meredith Gaffney, Chair).
Next scheduled meeting: December 9, 2020, 6:00 P.M., Branford High School Lower Media Center.
- B. Personnel & Finance Committee (Dawn Perrotti, Chair).
Next scheduled meeting: December 9, 2020, 6:30 P.M., Branford High School Lower Media Center.
- C. Teaching & Learning Committee (Ellen Michaels, Chair).
Next scheduled meeting: December 9, 2020 7:00 P.M., Branford High Lower Media Center.
- D. Policy Committee (Chad Edgar, Chair).
Next scheduled meeting: Wednesday, December 16, 2020, 6:00 P.M., Branford High Lower Media Center.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- 11** MOTION (Berdon/Perrotti) to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss the Branford Education Association (BEA) contract.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION

Mr. Prins adjourned the meeting into Executive Session at 8:52 PM. All Board members present at this evening's meeting including Superintendent Hernandez adjourned into the Executive Session.

- 12** Mr. Prins returned the meeting to Regular Session at 9:08 PM with no action taken.

ADJOURN

- 13** MOTION (Berdon/Gaffney) to adjourn.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Mr. Prins adjourned the meeting at 9:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Meredith Gaffney
Secretary

Prepared by,
Kerry Eyrich