

**SPECIAL BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES**

DATE: February 24, 2021

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

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

---

**ATTENDANCE**

<b>HERE</b>	<b>ATTENDEE</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
Y	John R. Prins, Chair	Board of Education
Y	Ellen Michaels, Vice-Chair	Board of Education
Y	Meredith Gaffney, Secretary	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	Ellen Michaels	Board of Education
Y	Dawn Perrotti	Board of Education
Y	Dr. Tim Raynor	Board of Education
Y	Hanna Bloomquist	Student Representative
Y	Carly Pierre-Louis	Student Representative
N	Aldin Aksamovic	Student Representative
Y	Patricio Banegas	Student Representative
Y	Hamlet M. Hernandez, Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Rachel Sexton, Assistant Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Don Neel, Chief Operating Officer	Central Office

Others present:

---

**BUSINESS ITEMS**

**ITEM DESCRIPTION**

---

**CALL TO ORDER**

**01** Meeting was called to order at 7:16 PM by BOE Chair, John Prins.

Meredith Gaffney and Tim Raynor made a request to set aside Roberts Rules in order to speak about a Public Forum. Mr. Prins stated that this was not possible as this was a Special meeting of the Board of Education.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Jennifer Alexander, Distric parent, discussed emails that she sent to Superintendent Hernandez and Mr. Prins, lack of communication and the need for a information plan for reopening, and a clear plan for kids to return to school.

Mike, Stackpole, District parent, discussed the need for kids to be back to school full

Megan Delucia, District parent, discussed emails that she sent, returning students to school, and having a clear plan.

Lisa Hildi, District parent, discussed allowing parents to attend basketball and hockey games.

Continued...

SPECIAL BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: February 24, 2021

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

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

---

**PUBLIC COMMENTS (Continued)**

Sarah MacDougal, BEA president, spoke about teacher experiences, District leadership, staff health, teachers and parents struggling, supporting a reopening plan with intention and deliberation and vaccinations.

Celia Toche, District parent, stated that these are unprecedented times and the community needs to be heard. Ms. Toche discussed lack of communication, the need to move to the next level, communication and collaboration and encouraging parents to speak out.

Charlie Mungohu, District parent, discussed other District's plans for 5 day in-person learning, parents suffering and the BOE acting.

Rick Ross, District parent, discussed allowing spectators at hockey games

Gregg Jerolman, Branford resident, discussed Mr. Prins role as BOE chair, the BOE election, school reopening, lack of communication, credibility, trust and transparency.

Jennifer Orlando, District parent, discussed fully reopening schools for in-person learning and presented the Board with a petition,

Jill Pompano, District parent, discussed the need for a 5 day in-person plan, better communication and collaboration.

Courtney McCarthy, District parent, spoke about coming forward for concerned parents, her children experience in hybrid and remote learning.

Chris Gargamelli, District parent, discussed the 3-minute public comment rule, clear and transparent plan for full in-person learning.

Brendan Morrissey, District parent, spoke about lack of communication, other town's planning compared to Branford and reopening schools now.

Matt Moran, District parent, spoke about District and Board leadership.

Jeff Haines, District parent, spoke about Branford's plan and a vote of no confidence in the Superintendent.

Michael DeStefano, District parent, stated that he echoed the sentiment of parents who have spoken, prioritizing younger students and his concern for first graders.

Martha Kenney, District parent, stated that each day gets harder than the next. Ms. Kenney discussed spending money for tutors and other services and her concern for a plan going further.

Continued...

SPECIAL BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: February 24, 2021

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

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

---

**PUBLIC COMMENTS (Continued)**

Dennis ?, District parent, stated that the District was using science to hide behind. Dennis also discussed the closure of Murphy school and asked to make an educated decision.

Sharon Klarman-Kenney, District parent, stated that there are no winners or looser or simple answers. Ms. Klarman Kenney read from an article from the Academy of Pediatric Study.

Jenae DeCerio, District parent, stated that parents are asking for students to return to school full time and discussed the letter that was sent out this afternoon to District parents.

Troy Sobieski, District parent, stated that he wanted to echo what been heard already. Mr. Sobieski discussed this evenings meeting and presentation, BOE members motioning for a plan to open schools and the letter that was sent to parents this afternoon.

Neil Sullivan, District parent, discussed his respect for BOE members and educators, the need for the BOE to listen to the voices that you heard this evening and to present a plan for families to return to in person learning this year.

Erin Carey, District parent, discussed what Madison Public Schools was doing for in-person learning and stronger effort to communication with families regarding other options.

Harlon Sextonholtz, District parent, discussed the criticism of teachers, their hard work and longer hours, and needing to be recognized.

Jessica Noble, District parent, stated that we need to invite God into the situation, her faith and belief that the Board will continue to do their due diligence.

Joe Ball IV, District parent, spoke about his experience with remote learning.

Nicole Ball, thanked the Board for listening, and stated that this year has been less than ideal. Ms. Ball thanked her children's teachers, Julia Verillo, Deb Bliven, and Matt Kaminsky and discussed how she has lost trust in the school Board.

Matty Noble, District student, spoke about loving the town of Branford and his teachers. He stated that BHS is not the same and the need to do a little bit better.

Stephanie Alderman, District parent, stated that she is sad to see school and children not there. Ms. Alderman discussed being mentally tired, stressed, the need for students to be back with friends, and the need to get to 5 days as soon as possible.

**2019-2020 SCASA STUDENT RECOGNITION RECIPIENTS**

The SCASA student awards presentation to Lucy Moran and Sofia DeSorbo will take place at a future meeting.

Continued...

SPECIAL BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: February 24, 2021

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

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

---

**PRESENTATION**

**A. Legislative Update**

Senator Christine Cohen and Representatives Sean Scanlon and Robin Comey provided an update on State legislation.

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

Michael Pascucilla, Director ESDHD, provided an update on COVID-19, among the items that he discussed were:

- Connecticut Data - Connecticut COVID-19 Summary (confirmed and probable cases, COVID-19 tests reported, daily positivity tests, current hospitalizations, associated deaths).
- Branford data (total cases, % positivity, rate per 100,000, fatalities)
- State rankings
- Branford testing positive rate - 14 day average
- Leading Indicators in Branford (case rate per 100,000)
- Statewide Current hospitalizations
- Branford weekly cases
- Branford cases by age
- Branford fatalities
- Indicators by County (Leading & Secondary)
- Indicators for consideration of Learning Models
- Town Level COVID response framework
- Year to Date Percentage of Students by Learning Model (as of January 2021)
- Staff and Student COVID-19 cases each month (September 2020 - February 2021)
- Demographics
- Vaccination planning/School District Clinics
- Vaccination Statistics (as of February 18, 2021)

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

Among the items the Student Representatives discussed were the beginning of the spring semester, teachers and students getting accustomed to hybrid learning and are looking forward to the future with a sense of hope, basketball and hockey have started, indoor track athletes have started to practice despite not having any competitions schedule yet. Clubs have been meeting regularly, Model Congress attended a virtual conference, the Peace Jam initiative, Black History Month events and Project Graduation fundraisers and senior activities (Road Map) and post-secondary plans. They concluded by saying that while it is challenging to stay motivated with no clear ending in sight we are all trying our best.

**SUPERINTENDENT REPORT/WIS PROJECT UPDATE**

Superintendent Hernandez discussed staff the roll out of staff vaccines, having a VAMS coordinator on site and working closely with Public Health, February fire/crisis drills, the Board choosing a potential meeting date for dialogue with the community regarding transitioning from the hybrid model and the factors included. After discussion the Board chose March 10th at 6:00 PM as the date of the community meeting.

Continued...

SPECIAL BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: February 24, 2021

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

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

---

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**02 Solar MAP Program Bid Waiver**

MOTION (Berdon/Michaels) to approve the Solar MAP Program Bid Waiver as discussed at the January 20, 2021 Special Personnel & Finance Committee Meeting.

APPROVED (Raynor, Borrus abstained)

**DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

**03 A. FY22 Operating Budget and Capital Budget**

a. MOTION (Berdon/Perrotti) to approve the FY 22 Operating budget as proposed by the Superintendent, in the amount of 59,587,008 dollars an increase of 1.29% over the current year and a Capital budget in the amount of 692,000 dollars.

APPROVED (Raynor & Berdon opposed)

b. MOTION (Borrus//Perrotti) to amend the BOE adopted FY 22 budget by \$700,956 dollars for the medical insurance program.

APPROVED (Berdon opposed)

**04 B. Second Reading of Policies:**

a. C19-01 - Temporary Policies and Regulations Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

MOTION (Edgar/Raynor) to approve the second reading of policies:

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

b. C19-02 - Use of Face Coverings in School- Health and Safety Protocols Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

MOTION (Edgar/Raynor) to approve the second reading of policies:

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

c. C19-03- Use of Face Coverings in School

MOTION (Michaels/Edgar) to approve the second reading of policies:

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

d. 5112 - Ages of Attendance

MOTION (Michaels/Borrus) to approve the second reading of policies:

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

**PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ACTION ITEMS**

Courtney McCarthy, District parent, discussed her agreement with Dr. Raynor and declining enrollment, and impact to enrollment.

Continued...

SPECIAL BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: February 24, 2021

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

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

---

**PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ACTION ITEMS (Continued)**

Gregg Jerolman, Branford resident, spoke about the Operating and Capital budget, District leadership, credibility, transparency changes to the District Athletic Director, COVID protocols and political posturing.

Jennifer Orlando, District parent, stated she was impressed with some of the questions from BOE members. Ms. Orland discussed incorrect information, scare tactics, Branford's elderly population, challenging information and a petition.

Becky Gillman, District parent, stated that she was happy to have further discussion next week. Ms. Gillman also discussed the need for a formal motion for the Superintendent to present a full in person plan.

Troy Sobieski, District parent, questioned the political background of the ESDHD Director.

Celia Toche, District parent, thanked the BOE members for looking at the Budget, asking questions. She discussed collaborating with the Board, hard choices for full in-person learning, science, and the need to be open and collaborative.

Megan Delucia, District parent, thanked the Board for listening to concerns and comments. Ms. Delucia discussed CDC recommendations and the students need to be back in school.

**STANDING COMMITTEES**

- A. Communication Committee (Meredith Gaffney, Chair).  
Next scheduled meeting: March 10, 2021, 6:00 PM, Branford High School Lower Media Center.
- B. Personnel & Finance Committee (Dawn Perrotti, Chair).  
Next scheduled meeting: March 10, 2021, 6:30 PM, Branford High School Lower Media Center.
- C. Teaching & Learning Committee (Ellen Michaels, Chair).  
Next scheduled meeting: March 10, 2021, 7:00 PM, Branford High Lower Media Center.
- D. Policy Committee (Dr. Tim Raynor, Chair).  
Next scheduled meeting: Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 6:00 P.M., Branford High Lower Media Center.

**BOARD REPORTS**

- A. ACES – Ellen Michaels discussed ACES award for a grant for energy and environmental protection (will purchase and electric bus and changing station), approved their operating budget, 47 students have return to in-person learning from remote
- B. BECC – Meredith Gaffney reported that the BECC will be conducting a survey to understand the gap in unmet needs.
- C. CABE – John Prins stated that CABE, CAPSS and two of the States teacher's unions were instrumental in powerful lobbying to get the Governor to change the focus for vaccinating teachers and school staff in March.

Continued...

SPECIAL BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

DATE: February 24, 2021

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

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

---

**ADJOURN**

**02** MOTION (Borris/Michaels) to adjourn.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Mr. Prins adjourned the meeting at 11:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Meredith Gaffney  
Secretary

Prepared by,  
Kerry Eyrich