



Mission Statement: To support and challenge all students to achieve personal and academic excellence in a student-centered environment.

BERLIN-BOYLSTON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, February 27, 5:00pm
Tahanto Regional Middle/High School
Multipurpose Room

REVISED

Stream link <https://www.youtube.com/@bbrsdlive2893/streams>

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School Committee: Mrs. Meagan Grill, Chair; Mrs. Julie Lee, Vice Chair; Mrs. Lori-Anne Hart, District Clerk; Mr. Michael Totman; Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti; Mrs. Julie Lee; Mrs. Lisa Mair

Administration: Ms. Carol Costello, Superintendent; Mr. Dan Ayala, Director of Facilities Ms. Nicole Bilotta, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent; Mr. John Campbell, Berlin Memorial Principal; Mrs. Jannel Fitzpatrick, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Ms. Nancy Konisky, Director of Finance & Operations; Mr. Paul Mara, Technology Coordinator; Ms. Lisa Sequeira, Tahanto Middle/High School Principal; Ms. Sally Stukuls, Director of Curriculum and Grants, Grades 6-12; Ms. Cinthia Sykes, Boylston Elementary Principal

Also Present: Mr. Patrick Minihan Ms. Elisabeth Murphy, Mr. Frank Seretti, Miss Emerson Walsh and members of the public

- I. **Call to Order** -Mrs. Meagan Grill called to order at 5:03pm.
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. **Public Comments – none**
- IV. **No communications**
- V. **Consent Agenda** – Motion made by Mrs. Lisa Mair and seconded by Mrs. Julie Lee 6-0
 - Payable Warrants
 - January 5, 2024 Budget, Facilities, and Safety Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
 - January 9, 2024 Open Meeting Minutes
- VI. **Reports**

- Chair's Report – *Mrs. Meagan Grill* – Mrs. Grill went over the order the meeting would go in. She noted that for the budget it is time to look at what items BBRSD wants in or out and not to nitpick certain line items.
- Tahanto Student Council Representative - *Miss Emerson Walsh* – Miss Emerson Walsh informed the group about Tahanto winter sports tournament and girls cheer results. Senior AP lit completed their exhibitions. Refresh Day is coming up soon with speakers and activities throughout the day. Lastly, they are hosting Café for Cause for the Alzheimer's Association.
- FY23 Audit Report Presentation - *Mr. Frank Seretti and Ms. Elizabeth Murphy, Powers & Sullivan, LLC* - Mr. Frank Seretti noted Powers and Sullivan, LLC merged with Marcum, LLP as of February 1st. Mr. Seretti thanked BBRSD for their cooperation and assistance during the audit. Information was loaded onto their secure portal, which works well for the auditors and for the clients. The audit was done in a few phases. The prelim phase was done in April and helped with getting started on year end work and in mid-November they came back out for the end of the year. Mr. Seretti went over several required communications. There were no new accounting policies adopted in 2023. He noted they did not encounter any difficulties with management during the report, they did not have to propose any adjustments and no disagreements occurred. The General fund balance is \$967k. From that amount 240k is the assigned fund balance, 97k in encumbrances, 150k excessive deficiency, which left 729k of unassigned fund balance. It is about 3% of the budget and the stopping point for the E&D calculation.

General fund operating results were at a decrease of 20k, but BBRSD planned for more at \$150k on the E&D budget. The revenue surplus offset it, mainly due to intergovernmental revenues. Expenditures were 18k under budget. Mr. Seretti explained BBRSD has a sound budget process, good budgetary controls and is budgeting conservatively enough on the revenues and had a surplus there, as well. The School Choice fund which is like a reserve for the school committee to use without appropriation. At the end of the year there was \$2.4 million in the fund and that's about 12% of the budget. BBRSD has a higher reserve than is normally seen in School Choice, which is a way you can have some money set aside for unexpected things that may come up. Post-employment liability had a \$705k increase in service cost and interest. The BBRSD rate is based on a 20-year double A municipal bond rate. If BBRSD is able to increase liability it would lower the cost significantly. There is a certain level of a discount rate needed to lower the liability rate. If BBRSD was able to increase the discount rate by 1% the open liability would go down by about \$3 million. The Worcester Regional Retirement System costs increased 774k, which came to 4.4 million at the end of year. Lower liability than opeb. There is \$12.1 million in long term outstanding debt, with \$99k paid down on principal payments and no short-term debt outstanding. To summarize Mr. Seretti noted they were able to issue an unmodified opinion on financial statements, all reporting deadlines were met, there were not any internal control deficiencies that would lead to a weakness. There was also an audit for federal awards, as well \$1.1 million was expended on child nutrition, special education, Esser grants. He noted another clean report.

For the management report there were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. They recommend fraud risk assessments to be put in place and have a formal process to look at different areas each year. These can help with understanding where the risks are with fraud with money and then what controls are in place and determining if more are needed. Mr. Totman

mentioned internal controls were brought up in last year's report and asked if those were followed up in this year's. For 2023 nothing has been done anything yet, but is something the district is looking into. Mrs. Grill asked about the fraud risk assessment and Mr. Seretti said he would see if the company would be able to do that or if it would need to be a different company. Ms. Konisky has reached out to a company mentioned by the auditors.

- Director of Finance and Operations - *Ms. Nancy Konisky*

The RFP for a Food Service Management Company will be presented to the school committee on April 8th. On page 16 there is language about current employees. They are up for their unified agreements and will meet with BBRSD next week. A new manager would be out of the food service revolving account. Ms. Konisky gave a brief overview of the budget. She explained that there is a 10% increase district wide. Ms. Konisky noted on page 3 on her budget overview there are key highlights and notable increases, for each school. Mr. Totman asked for clarification on the document. Mrs. Grill noted the number for the SRO is located in other services. Before the February break the Budget Subcommittee met with the towns and got more information. Boylston informed BBRSD that an SRO would need to go through the school budget entirely. The idea would be that Boylston would use an SRO in the summer and during vacations. Berlin has not commented yet. The current SRO salary in the budget accounts for only school days. BBRSD will need to go back to the town and negotiate with them. SROs are still police academy graduates and then receive additional training. Mrs. Grill explained Chief Annunziata seemed to think he would have use for an officer, but the town said they did not need one. She wanted to know if the committee wanted the SRO in the budget. An SRO could help with kids who need another outlet. Ms. Degliaberti asked if the SRO could go on the warrant as a separate item so people could truly vote. It was noted the job description needs to be reflective of what they position will be doing. Being involved with just the school is different than also being involved with the police department.

Mrs. Grill asked the committee for their opinions on the remainder of the budget. Mr. Totman asked why class supplies were taken out. Mrs. Grill explained it was cut due to the BBRSD budget being over what the town could give them. Mr. Totman explained it causes anxiety for families if items are required. He feels the school should supply it. Mrs. Hart explained this has been practice for a long time in many locations and with this kind of budget the money may need to go elsewhere. Mrs. Lee mentioned students putting in money and having the PTO help out. Mr. Campbell explained that Berlin is capped at \$25 and no child who can't do that goes without. He reviews the lists and uses Staples as baseline. There are wish list items that are added, but not required. It is hard to get volunteer support to do bulk ordering through PTO. Ms. Sequeira explained in July target has sales with affordable prices less than a supplier. Mrs. Grill explained if the budget went over the amount then they would need to do an override. Mr. Totman shared that they are supposed identify the needs of the school. Mrs. Hart mentioned that parents can donate supplies, but they cannot donate a paraprofessional or other item. This is a way they can help. Ms. Costello brought up do the schools have enough supplies. She would like the language looked at such as wish list or required. At Tahanto there are no specific lists to the effect of 3-inch red (brand) binder. BBRSD may need to look at the expensive items and build up ones to borrow at the school. If there was unlimited money BBRSD would supply, but the budget is already really limited. Mrs. Grill rather do an override for building repairs than pencils. The town of Boylston is saying 500k is what BBRSD is allowed. Items need to be cut in the budget since they are 850k over for Boylston. 10 teachers would possibly need to be cut from Boylston.

Special ed transportation costs have more than doubled. An override may need to be done, because of the district needs. An additional \$125k would be needed for the SRO if entirely BBRSD budget. Mrs. Lee thinks it's a better idea for an SRO on the warrant for vote. An override would be a lot of work. Mr. Matt Mecum noted it is a different kind of override when you are saying otherwise 10 teachers would be cut and asking for an override versus asking for one and then adding a bunch more on top. A compromise would to be made. He explained it shouldn't be an either-or situation. It was noted the district would probably slide back if the items in the budget are not pushed through. Ms. Costello mentioned looking at items that could be delayed, but it would not bring the budget down enough. Mrs. Degliaberti mentioned if BBRSD isn't able to hire special education teachers could it lead to more out of district tuitions? Mrs. Fitzpatrick said it is possible and there is a case load concern especially at high school level, right now. One teacher would service multiple students. Ms. Sequeira said an athletic trainer could be delayed since it is not yet required. Ms. Konisky reviewed the totals for above level service costs without special ed transportation since it cannot be cut. The group discussed if they could raise spots for school choice. Next steps will be for Mrs. Grill to set up a budget meeting and meet with the towns to figure out a solution. Mr. Totman asked for an analysis on the impact of the items that will be cut.

They will be meeting with Berlin on Thursday at 6pm to discuss capital items. BBRSD will look at what items are priority. For capital requests a debt exclusion may be needed because of the BES roof. It would only be a tax for the length it takes to pay the roof off. No free cash from Berlin is available for operational needs. Mrs. Grill will confirm free cash number for Berlin. Mr. Totman expressed concern with a new development in Berlin potentially being built and how does BBRSD account for that. Mrs. Hart noted BBRSD has to be cognoscente on the impact of the taxpayers and how thin people are stretched at the moment.

- Administrator Reports (*5 mins each*)
 - i. BES Principal - *Ms. Cinthia Sykes* – Ms. Cinthia Sykes highlighted positive things happening at BES. They are working on getting more clubs. Staff are working on bringing kids in during recess to read and also participate in math related activities. Some of the teachers are stepping up and volunteering their time to work with the kids. Two BES students have gotten notices about improvement in MCAS scoring and BES is doing a luncheon to celebrate. For AIMSweb there was good news and some improvements needed. Ms. Sykes met with her teams to talk about the positive points and to discuss where they can work on items. The fifth-grade team discovered vocabulary is lacking and are now adding it in more. The Kindergarten scores were looked at, as well. Some students are having tutoring and progress monitoring being done by the teachers. Mr. Totman asked about the vocabulary. Ms. Sykes explained it is being integrated more into morning reading and working it into the day to bring that area up going forward. Mrs. Grill asked if the kindergarten class size impacts scoring. Ms. Sykes said large classes impact any grade. Mr. Totman noted the fifth grade had the best scores. Ms. Sykes explained she only highlighted a few to stay within the meeting timeframe. All grades celebrating positive things and discussing items to work on. She noted we can always do better. Mrs. Grill noted it is good to hear the progress. Ms. Sykes explained the passion the teachers have for helping the students. Mr. Totman asked if there was a way to see

growth for each class as they move through? She said they can look at it going forward. Mrs. Grill asked to look at it the for the spring Aimsweb report.

- ii. BMS Principal - *Mr. John Campbell* – Mr. Campbell highlighted NAEP testing they have been chosen for the 2nd time in 5 years. BMS does not get any results, but it is a nice experience for kids. They are also fundraising for natures classroom. Mr. Campbell felt BMS has solid scores and growth for the Aimsweb testing. Mr. Totman asked about fifth grade math dropping. Mr. Campbell noted literacy has come a long way and math metrics are the next area to tackle. AIMSweb will help identify where the kids are struggling and give tools to help. They shoot for 60th percentile as a grade because it is compared to a national sample. Depending on how math is taught some items children may have come across and some items they may not have seen. Mr. Totman asked what does BMS need to get the kids up to the basic level. Mr. Campbell explained that the 60th percentile is 80% of kids fall below the 60th percentile (bell curve). Grade level percentile that is all of the kids. They test the students to see where students need help. Mr. Campbell feels BMS has good class sizes and veteran teachers, but needs things to do to help move the kids forward. He needs more time for teachers to work together.
- iii. TAH Principal - *Ms. Lisa Sequeira* – Ms. Lisa Sequeira, noted there is a lot to celebrate at Tahanto. She noted two items: the school climate survey results and aimsweb testing. The survey was created by the teachers and the results have been shared with the admin team and department chairs. There were 100 respondents to the survey. Results gathered that students feel safe and welcome, families looking for more hands-on opportunities and to partner at the younger grades to understand progress monitoring. The survey helps to lead to conversations on how to improve in certain areas or how to recognize certain accomplishments. They want families to feel connected and students to feel supported. Ms. Sequeira noted they used the Aimsweb results and look at a variety of reports that can provide more diverse data to inform instruction. Some grades have an intervention block so they are looking at scheduling throughout the grades. Ms. Renee Legendre noted eighth grade has a Stag block for study skills, note taking, executive function work; skills needed before high school. Ms. Costello explained bringing in the seconded assistant principal in Tahanto has made a massive impact. Having the three allows them to focus more on certain areas and also work as a team. Also having Ms. Sally Stukuls focusing on 6-12 curriculum helps with her being able to be at the schools. Ms. Sequeira expressed how grateful she is for the new positions/dynamic that allows them to take on more things. She explained Tahanto is in a great position. Mrs. Grill noted they had a great admin team in place. Mr. Totman asked about the bathroom maintenance within the district. Ms. Sequeira explained there have been problems with staffing and that that age group may not always the be the cleanest. Mr. Dan Ayala explained the staffing issues have been addressed. Mr. Totman asked about a line in her report mentioning students don't feel like they are being noticed when they are struggling. Ms. Sequeira mentioned there is a disconnect on the survey where students noted they felt successful but then below saying they didn't feel like teachers noticed when they struggle.
- iv. Director of Pupil Personnel Services - *Mrs. Jannel Fitzpatrick* – Mrs. Fitzpatrick highlighted the new IEP form. This is the first time in 20 years it has been updated. Students receiving special ed have an IEP. There have been substantial changes to the form. The form is focusing on student strength and vision. Training sessions are happening with staff and they are working with SEPAC. There would be a budgetary

component in relation to the software, administrative support during implementation and the amount of time it will take for the special education coordinator. She mentioned having school committee members join some of the PD trainings. Focus on training opportunities for families to come as well. Mrs. Hart thanked Mrs. Fitzpatrick for how she presented her data.

- v. Director of Curriculum and Grants, Grades 6-12 – *Ms. Sally Stukuls* -
 - 1. TAH Internship Program – Ms. Stukuls is working with Ms. Ilene Rodman on a job shadowing internship program. They felt it was important for high school students to have opportunities to be exposed to different job opportunities. She has worked with Ms. Kim Rozack to review the program. Students will work with Ms. Rodman to fill out paperwork and then meet with Ms. Stukuls. They do a reflection after the job shadow and turn it in for junior year. For Senior year, they would do an internship. A list of places has been put together for students to go to and they can also propose places, as well. Ms. Stukuls would work as a liaison for the students. The internship would work into their yearly schedule. There are weekly reflections and a summary presentation at the end. If there is not a fit they can meet to discuss other areas. A career fair will be held on April 4th. Ms. Stukuls has information for the internship supervisors on dos and don'ts and things the students are allowed to do. She has spoken to other districts who have internship programs for their input. Mrs. Hart asked about the excused absences and college visits. She also asked if the internship would be Pass/Fail. It is pass fail. BBRSD can add on a few spots in the spring so students have enough places to park if they are participating. Ms. Costello shared that the town municipalities are looking for interns as well. Ms. Stukuls will reach out to Job core to attend the job fair.
 - 2. Student Opportunities Report - First Read – strategies given for how to implement vote on next meeting.
- vi. Technology Coordinator - *Mr. Paul Mara* – Mr. Paul Mara thanked Ms. Nicole Bilotta, Ms. Dawn Porter and Ms. Eloise Salls for work on the Student Attending Report. Civil Rights reporting was delayed because the site was overloaded. BBRSD was certified yesterday and was able to meet original deadline. There are big changes with the website. Thursday is the new launch day. There were some places on the website where content was not migrated, or there was no navigation to get to the pages. They are working on fixing the issues and hopefully the new site will be up Thursday. There is the ability on the site to assign editing privileges, but limit publishing. Mrs. Julie Lee asked if an intern could do it. There is more capability with the website on limiting time items are on the new website. Mrs. Degliaberti asked about a district calendar. Mr. Mara explained there would be a way to show all three schools. Mr. Totman wanted to know more about the paper forms that parents use and if they have been migrated to an electronic version. Mr. Mara explained it would be set up through Power School and is a work in progress. Mrs. Degliaberti asked if the program of studies could be on the website. Once it is approved it could be added to the website.

- Subcommittee Updates

- i. Student Success and Technology Subcommittee - *Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti* – No meeting, Ms. Mair is working on the student handbook.

- ii. Budget and Facility Subcommittee - *Mrs. Meagan Grill* – Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Grill met with Ms. Costello and Ms. Konisky. They do endorse this budget.
 - iii. Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee - *Mrs. Lori Hart* – The subcommittee is on target with the evaluation timeline and Ms. Costello will present at the current meeting.
 - iv. Policy Subcommittee - *Mr. Michael Totman* – Three policies are up for vote. The first reads were seen in September/October.
- Superintendent of Schools Report - *Ms. Carol Costello*
 - FY25 School Calendar - First Read – Ms. Costello talked about problem solving for childcare issues with the increase in half days listed on the proposed calendar. Half days are beneficial to all of the teachers and help with the vertical alignment between the elementary and middle/high schools. Mrs. Deglialberti asked if rotating the day of the week would be better. The schools rotate specials and Tahanto rotates normally so it wouldn't disrupt anything. Mrs. Lee mentioned working with the rec departments during those days for potential care. Ms. Costello noted they have started potential lists of students from Tahanto who could babysit. On the calendar March 26th would need to be coded teal. PD days are mandatory for the teachers. Using personal days on those days is discouraged. In the current year there are 4 PD days. Friday the 14th of June is currently the last day of school for BBRSD this year. June 23rd needs to be changed to light blue. Mr. Totman asked why school couldn't start after Labor Day. It was done because of MIIA regulations and only being able to practice one week before school starts. Mrs. Renee Legendre mentioned for parents most summer programs end mid-august, which could pose an issue for childcare. Ms. Costello would like to keep the current calendar.
 - Superintendent's Goals – Ms. Costello worked on color coding her goals to show connection of progress of goals and the standards. She explained her job is to help oversee her administrative team and to help them do their job and help make improvements. The team has been working together and she is proud of the progress the team has made as the year goes on. Ms. Costello is learning more about the budget process and working with her mentor. The committee thanked Ms. Costello for all of her work and how she has gone above and beyond.

BBRSD has been working to come up with a spring celebration of learning for families to learn what is happening, see their child's work and the learning going on in the classroom. They have been working with the BBEA on what it will look like. The idea is to have a celebration of learning for elementary students and showcases for middle/high school students. Principals will send notices out on Friday. There will be a 5th grade orientation. Ms. Costello will do a survey after to get feedback. This came out of previous contract negotiations.

 - MSBA - Preparation of Statement of Interest for the Boylston Elementary School roof - Status of report – Vote to let Ms. Costello submit the grant to pay for BES roof repair.
 - SOA presentation - *Mr. John Campbell and Ms. Stukuls*
 - New York City Field Trip presentation - *Mr. Patrick Minihan* – Mr. Patrick Minihan and Ms. Caroline Stouffle – Mr. Patrick Minihan proposed to go to NYC with Econ 7 students. The past two years have been day trips. The feedback from the kids was a that it is a great trip with new exposure and adventures. The idea is to help build relationships between students and teachers,

which goes along with what the school is encouraging. The plan is to visit Wall Street and seeing where stock market is, which connects with curriculum of students understanding the role of government and providing service, with some financial literacy components. Ms. Hart expressed her enthusiasm for the trip and providing this experience for the children. Mr. Totman talked about expanding in the future.

VII. Business Items

- Approval of FY24 Budget Transfers – **Vote** – Ms. Degliaberti wanted to know about making payroll in house. It is currently in house but the system is through Harpers. Additionally, she asked about the translator cost and if there were grants available for funding. BBRSD will keep an eye out to see if there are any. She also asked if there were people in the town who could translate. Either way it would come to a cost for certain items. Lastly, Ms. Degliaberti had questions about the nurse contract amounts. Ms. Konisky let the group know she is available for questions if the committee has any. **Motion made by Mrs. Lisa Mair and seconded by Mrs. Julie Lee, 6-0, motion passes.**
- Approval of TAH Internship Program -**Vote - Motion made by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti and seconded by Mrs. Julie Lee, 6-0, motion passes.**
- Approval to permit the Superintendent to submit the Statement of Interest to the MA Building Authority (MSBA) – **Vote – Motion made by Mrs. Meagan Grill and seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, 6-0, motion passes**
- Approval of New York City Field Trip -**Vote Motion made by Mrs. Degliaberti and seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, 6-0 motion passes.**
- Approval of the Recognition of New Union Formation of Paraprofessionals – **Vote** - Ms. Kim Rozack explained to the committee they initially had two options of to vote and recognize or not do anything. Ms. Rozack explained a third option. The paras are currently in a unified group, but now are on the table to to be considered a union going forward. They disclaimed interest in being a unified group. The school committee could authorize Ms. Rozak to interact with the attorney with MTA about a voluntary election. This option would allow the paras to vote. Sometimes people change their mind. It is always by secret ballot for each person who is eligible to vote. Ms. Rozack would agree with the method whether its mail or in person. Through a consent election you do have to agree who is eligible to vote. Her recommendation is to vote to have her advise MTA attorney that they will go forward with a consent election. The vote honors the behalf of the indivial and doesn't put in the pressure on them to vote a certain way. **Motion made to authorize Ms. Rozack to authorize the parafessionals to have a consent election. Motioned made by Mrs. Lori Hart and seconded by Mrs. Julie Lee, 6-0, motion passes.**
- **Approval of the 2023 School Committee Annual Report - Vote – Motion made by Mrs. Julie Lee and seconded by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti, 6-0, motion passes.**
- Policies
 - DJE-1 Regional School District Procurement Requirements- **Vote – Motion made by Mrs. Lori Hart seconded by Mrs. Julie Lee, 6-0, motion passes.** Mrs. Mair had questions about repetitive language in the policy. Mrs. Hart will go back and look at it. **Mr. Michael Totman made an amendment to accept the policy in the drive and to fix duplicated language, seconded by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti, 6-0, amendment passes.**
 - EFE - Civil Rights Complaint Policy for Child Nutrition Programs- **Vote – Motion made by Mrs. Lori Hart and seconded by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti, 6-0, Mr. Michael**

Totman moved to amend the policy to unbold the bold seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, 6-0, amendment passes.

- **IMGA - Service Animals in Schools- Vote – Service dogs are typically hypoallergenic incase a child has an allergy- Motion made by Mrs. Lisa Mair and seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, 6-0, motion passes.**
- **Tahanto MS and HS Course of Study - First Read**
- **2024-2025 School Calendar - First Read**

VIII. Upcoming Meeting

- **March 12, 2024 Budget Hearing at 5pm in-person**
- **March 19, 2024 Zoom Final Budget Vote**

Meeting adjourned at 8:56pm.

The listing of items is those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may, in fact, be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

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