

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, March 28, 2022

The meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held in person on Monday, March 28, 2022 at Mt. Hope High School in the Cafeteria located at 199 Chestnut Street, Bristol, RI 02809.

Present: Marjorie McBride, Chairperson; Tara Thibaudeau, Vice Chair, Sheila Ellsworth, Treasurer; Victor Cabral, Secretary; Carly Reich, Sarah Bullard, Erin Schofield, and Karen Cabral; Ana C. Riley, Superintendent of Schools; Diane Sanna, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent; Anthony Ferrucci, Chief Financial Officer; Thomas Wood, Director of Facilities; Rose O'Connor, Director of Technology; Mary Ann Carroll, Esq., District Solicitor; Diana Campbell, Recording Secretary.

I. OPEN SESSION

Chairperson Marjorie McBride called the meeting to order at approximately 7:06 p.m.

II. OPENING BUSINESS

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson McBride invited all present to join in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no requests for Public Comment

I. CONSENT AGENDA

All items under the Consent Agenda are considered to be routine by the School Committee and will be enacted by one motion.

Chairperson McBride pulled Items A, B, and C from the Consent Agenda

D. Approval of Five (5) Homeschool Requests

E. Approval of Property Disposal List

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to approve the remaining items on the Consent Agenda; seconded by Mr. Cabral. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairperson McBride continued with the remaining items of the Consent Agenda.

A. Approval of the Minutes of the February 28, 2022, July 19, 2021, and March 15, 2022 meetings

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Ms. Thibaudeau requested two corrections to the July 19, 2021 Minutes. She corrected the Motion on Page 6, Item VIII, B, to indicate that the Motion was made by Ms. Schofield, not Ms. Ellsworth, and the start date identified in the motion to September 9, 2021, not September 8, 2021.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to accept the Minutes, with the corrections; seconded by Ms. Cabral. The motion was approved unanimously.

B. Monthly Fiscal Report

Ms. Ellsworth requested that Mr. Ferrucci provide a brief explanation of the Monthly Fiscal Report.

Mr. Ferrucci provided a summary of the Report. He explained that the report provides a three-year history of the district's financial results as well as the current fiscal year's Budget, Actuals to Date, and Encumbrances, as of March 28, 2022. He noted that Object Code 57309, Technology-Related Hardware is showing that it's over budget by \$107,169. He explained that this was because the technology is to be covered using e-Rate and Esser funds. The expense will be moved out to the proper account in the General Fund to correct the Budget.

He also noted that Fringe Benefits are tracking lower than expected. If the trend continues, he expects to be able to chip the deficit down significantly.

Ms. Ellsworth asked if the next report will include forecasted expenses. Mr. Ferrucci responded that he would be ready to speak to this at the next meeting and that, if trends continued, it was possible that we would have a balanced budget by the end of the fiscal year. He'll update the committee at the next meeting.

MOTION: Ms. Ellsworth made a motion to accept the Monthly Fiscal Report; seconded by Ms. Cabral. The motion was approved unanimously.

C. FY 2021 Year End Audit Results

Mr. Ferrucci provided an update on the FY2021 Annual Audit. He stated that the audit is 98% complete and has been distributed in draft form. The report has been provided to the Town of Bristol in time for their capital bond application. Before finalizing the audit, the district needs to submit BWRSD's Final UCOA Report to RI DoE and the RI Municipal Finance Report.

He was pleased to report that the auditors found only a \$1.00 difference in Revenues and \$40.00 (over) in Expenses, netting a change of \$39.00. He stated that he was very happy with the way that the Business Office was able to work on the Budget in preparation for the successful audit review.

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MOTION: Ms. Ellsworth made a motion to accept the FY2021 Year End Audit Results; seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. The motion was approved unanimously.

II. PRESENTATION

A. Bristol Warren Education Foundation Update

Ms. Darcy DaCosta gave a presentation on the Bristol Warren Education Foundation (BWEF). She thanked the School Committee and District teachers and administrators for being open and welcoming to the work that the BWEF is doing. She thanked the members of the BWEF for their support and noted that she is speaking on behalf of everyone on the BWEF Board.

She explained how the Foundation got its start as a collaboration between community, including local businesses, and educators. The organization has evolved over the years, changing its name (once) and its logo (twice). The organization raises money to fund good ideas through its Grants program.

She went on to explain that the Grants program is open once a year, where teachers submit applications for ideas, rooted in curriculum. The Grants Committee reviews the applications, using a rubric, and decides on the level of funding to recommend to the Board. She explained that due to COVID, the organization was not able to provide grants, but that it is starting up again.

There is also a Scholarship program, with 4 Scholarships being distributed to date.

This year, the Foundation's main fundraising event, the Bodacious Bee, will be a "Bee Recess" instead. It will be a party in the school yard at Hope & Main in Warren. It will be a celebration, as well as a fundraiser.

Chairperson McBride stated that she liked the idea of a "recess" and the move to Warren for the event.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about the timeline for the grant process. Ms. DaCosta explained that grant applications were due by the end of Friday, March 25. The group received 13 applications, with a couple more being granted an extension. Decisions on the applications will be complete before the end of the year. The Grants must be used before the end of the 2022-2023 school year. If the funded activity cannot be completed within the year, the applicant must re-apply for the funds.

She did say that during COVID, there were some just-in-time (JIT) grants approved. They will be completed by the end of this school year.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked what the average amount of funds that are granted for each project is. Ms. DaCosta stated that most grants are for under \$1000. There have been larger grants, \$10,000, for example, for Nature's Classroom.

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Ms. Reich thanked the BWEF for being cheerleaders for the District's teachers.

III. DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION ITEMS

A. 2022-2023 Calendar

Superintendent Riley presented her recommended Calendar for the 2022-2023 School Year, stating that it was modeled after the State of RI's recommendations and compares with other local Districts.

She explained that when Labor Day is more than 5 days after the beginning of September, the school year typically starts before Labor Day. The proposed Calendar has a school start date of August 29, 2022 and ending date of June 16, 2023.

She explained that there will be a "new staff" orientation on August 23 to provide new staff/teachers with training on technology, processes, etc. There will also be a voluntary Professional Development Day to provide training on Mental Health first aid. This training, offered with Bristol Warren Education Foundation (BWEF) and the Health Equity Zone (HEZ) will be repeated, with the District setting up a train-the-trainer model so that District teachers can provide the training going forward. All the teachers will start with a Professional Development (PD) Day on August 25, 2022.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommended 2022-2023 Calendar; seconded by Ms. Reich.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Cabral asked if the RI DOE recommended the start and end dates. Superintendent Riley responded that the State does not provide start and end dates, only guidelines.

Mr. Cabral continued to state that he is concerned about school starting before Labor Day. He requested that the start be moved to either after Labor Day to September 6 or to August 31st, which will provide a full week at the end of the teachers' vacations. Superintendent Riley explained that if the start date gets moved to after Labor Day, the end date will have to be June 26, 2023. She explained that she is looking to negotiate the January 2, 2023 holiday with the BWEA. The January 2nd date is a Monday and is a holiday because New Year's Day is on a Sunday, so the holiday was pushed to Monday. If the union agrees, she may be able to move the start date to August 30 and the PD date to August 29.

Ms Reich stated that she is fine with the calendar as proposed.

Ms. Thibaudeau noted that the April vacation falls on the 2nd week of April, not the 3rd week as in the past. She also asked how snow days will be handled.

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Superintendent Riley responded that there will be no combination days for professional development and Distance Learning (DL). They were too difficult to manage. She stated that if snow is predicted, students will be sent home with their Chromebooks and will do DL only.

Ms. Schofield stated that the April vacation week falls in line with other communities in RI, except Barrington.

Superintendent repeated that if she is able to negotiate with the BWEA to remove January 2, 2023 as a holiday, she will change the start date to August 30, with a PD date on August 29. She did not make a commitment to changing the start date until she had a chance to discuss it with the BWEA.

Chairperson McBride summarized the discussion to state that the Committee has three options: accept the Calendar as proposed; change the start date to August 30; or change the start date to after Labor Day.

MOTION: Mr. Cabral made a motion to amend the motion to change the start date to September 6, 2022; seconded by Ms. Ellsworth.

VOTE: The motion on the amendment to the motion failed with a vote of 1-7. Ms. Bullard, Ms. Cabral, Ms. Ellsworth, Chairperson McBride, Ms. Reich, Ms. Schofield, and Ms. Thibaudeau voted in dissent.

MOTION: Ms. Schofield made a motion to amend the motion to accept the proposed 2022-2023 Calendar as presented, but to adjust it if the January 2 date becomes available; seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau.

VOTE: The motion on the amendment was approved with a vote of 7-1, with Mr. Cabral voting in dissent.

VOTE: The amended motion was approved unanimously.

B. IRS Audit Results and Authorization to Pay Requested Withholdings

Superintendent Riley explained that the IRS Audit resulted in an expense that was not included in the Budget, so she is requesting that the School Committee approve the payment of \$20,985 (total).

Mr. Ferrucci stated that the payments are needed because the District paid two employees as contractors (1099) instead of as employees, which would have required the District to withhold taxes.

In general Mr. Ferrucci stated that he is pleased that the IRS Audit, given the number of turnovers, etc, only found two corrections.

DISCUSSION:

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Ms. Thibaudeau asked which line the funds would come from. Mr. Ferrucci explained that there is an account for Claims & Settlements under Misc. Expenditures. He did not feel that the funds would have an impact on the overall budget.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked how Mr. Ferrucci plans to avoid the same mistakes. Mr. Ferrucci responded that the staff is better at paying better attention and he does not anticipate a repeat of the error.

Ms. Ellsworth asked if the District could pursue getting reimbursed for the expense from the employees. Mr. Ferrucci deferred to Attorney Carroll, who stated that she didn't think that the District would be able to get reimbursement.

MOTION: Ms. Ellsworth made a motion to authorize the payments to the IRS as recommended in the Superintendent's memo; seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. The Motion was approved unanimously.

- IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Executive Session pursuant to RIGL §42-46-5(a) for discussion of the following:
- A. **42-46-5 (a) (2)** Litigation/Legal Advice

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to go into Executive Session; seconded by Mr. Cabral. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Schofield excused herself from the meeting. The Committee went into Executive Session at 8:13 pm.

OPEN SESSION: The committee resumed Open Session at 8:23 pm.

VIII. ACTION

- A. Approve and Seal the Minutes of the Executive Session

MOTION: Mr. Cabral made a motion to approve and seal the minutes of the Executive Session; seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairperson McBride stated that while in Executive Session, the Committee authorized the Trust to settle two cases. When the cases are settled, the Committee will report on the details of the settlements.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Ellsworth. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Victor Cabral, Secretary /dbc