



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

BERLIN-BOYLSTON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 7, 2024, 5:00pm Open Meeting

7:00pm Executive Session

Tahanto Regional Middle/High School

Multipurpose Room

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

This meeting may be recorded, and your image or voice may be broadcast.

I. **Call to Order** - Mrs. Meagan Grill called the meeting to order at 5:02pm. She addressed the group letting them know she wanted to honor everyone who came to speak.

II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

III. **Public Comments** -

Ms. Hilary Kuhn, mother of a student at BMS, came to advocate for the Performing Arts, theater, music, and items music teachers needed at BMS. She formed a Performing Arts Committee through LINK and created a packet of information with the music needs. Mrs. Grill was appreciative of the work she has done.

Ms. Kyle Burns, the President of LINK spoke about the town meeting and how BBRSD came within ten votes. She suggested rallying families to be in support of the school budget. It was felt that the 10 votes could have been earned if there was more transparency in the budget presented. She explained that the Town of Berlin gave a line item budget. It was requested on behalf of the individuals that reached out to the that in the next portion of the budget the school committee approaches it with the ability to provide a transparent budget.

Mr. Jason Paquette, parent of students at BMS/Tahanto, spoke about the first town meeting. He read a statement to offer feedback. The feedback was that there was missing important information, no data in the warrant handout and issues with having justifiable information readily available. He suggested BBRSD include a proactive distribution handout, having a slide on screen, highlight what components cannot be changed and why, what spending cannot be cut, and dollar per student. The

audience needed clarification on details and to be shown a baseline minimum of what is required. He suggested answering questions directly, making it easy for the townspeople to understand, and healing the relationship with the Berlin Finance Committee.

- IV. **Communications** - Mrs. Lisa Mair explained people in the community reached out to her with similar feelings to what had been previously discussed.
- V. **Consent Agenda** - Motion to approve the consent agenda was approved by Mrs. Lori Hart and seconded by Mrs. Julie Lee, 6-0, motion passes
- Payable Warrants
 - April 8, 2024 Policy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
 - April 9, 2024 Open Meeting Minutes
- VI. **Reports**
- Chair's Report – *Mrs. Meagan Grill* - Mrs. Grill informed the group that any items that could not be discussed would be overflowed to the May 28th meeting.
 - Superintendent of Schools Report - *Ms. Carol Costello*
 - Presentation of Self-Assessment for 2023-2024 Goals - Presented after executive session
 - Time Management System (TMS) - *Mr. Andy Brown, Vice President of Strategy and Communications, and Dr. Paul Livingston, Senior School Business Administrator* - BBRSD received a proposal from TMS. Ms. Costello reached out to former superintendents about TMS and they do a lot of the work that could fill BBRSD gaps. Ms. Costello communicated with the school committee about TMS and that they have a company that sends people in. She had not hired them yet and wanted their input. Mr. Andy Brown shared they can do anything BBRSD needs them to do. What they have heard in the meeting is nothing they haven't heard before and not uncommon in regional schools. They can figure out the towns' requirements and the law and how the school can function legally.

Mr. Paul Livingston explained they would be working with a team and if one person does not have expertise someone else on the team will. He has had many regional experiences and was the former Lancaster Superintendent. They want to honor the culture in the district and in the communities and find best practices for that and what are the steps. The team may not always be onsite, but would still work virtually. This allows for a bigger team instead of one person.

Ms. Costello worked out a timeline with Attorney Kimberly Rozack for TMS to join through August 7th with an option to go longer. The Finance Director has been job posted and has candidates. Ms. Costello is seeing who would serve on the interview committee. She explained she does have the funds to cover TMS coming on. TMS has held positions as a finance director full time for a school. They have been in Ware for 15 years at less than what you pay for an inhouse person.

They also have a strategic planning and communication side to their business, which includes how to communicate the budget, etc. In previous work, they helped a company identify flash points to help get people behind the budget. They worked to show throughout the year why an item was needed in the budget. TMS can do payroll and bookkeeping. Mrs. Hart mentioned TMS

is taking something very stressful and giving hope. Ms. Costello shared she would be in touch with TMS as the school committee was in support.

- Subcommittee Updates- none
 - Student Success and Technology Subcommittee - *Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti*
 - Budget and Facility Subcommittee - *Mrs. Meagan Grill*
 - Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee - *Mrs. Lori Hart - Update to be done after Executive Session*
 - Policy Subcommittee - *Mr. Michael Totman*

- School Choice Follow-Up Discussion- *Mrs. Julie Lee - Discussed after returning from executive session - See below*

- Budget Discussion (If Berlin does not approve the School Committee budget) - Mrs. Grill explained that the BBRSD budget starts in the fall. The principals give their lists of needs and then it is given to the towns and they let BBRSD know whether it is something they can work with or not. All of the previous open budget meeting videos, agendas and approved minutes can be found on the website.

For most of what was asked the towns said they just couldn't do it. BMS took everything out. Tahanto added a finance teacher for the state mandate and BES added one teacher. Mrs. Grill explained after the budget presentations she did not get any questions. The final budget was presented at a public forum on March 19. The budget passed. The town meeting is not the place to discuss the budget but, either to approve or deny it. Berlin failed the budget and Boylston passed the budget. Now the budget comes back to the School Committee to decide either to change the budget or approve the same budget. The town would have 45 days to hold a new town meeting to vote. The warrant is printed by the town. They were told no by Berlin about putting the school committee budget in the warrant.

Mr. Totman felt there was a clear disconnect and didn't know where it was happening. BBRSD will do something to put information together before the next budget vote. Mrs. Hart suggested putting some of the budget meetings on special spots online for easier access and on Facebook. Mrs. Julie Lee felt the Budget Subcommittee could do what was being asked. The School Committee does not have access to the general ledger because they sign the warrants. The district prepares the budget and the School Committee approves it. Budget information was put in the district newsletter and sent to the towns and schools.

BBRSD is working to hire a new Director of Finance. It was unclear if Boylston had to vote or not again. If the committee accepted the Berlin Fincomm budget there would be no second meeting. BBRSD presented the budget in February, as well. The reason for the timeline this year was that some items for the assessment do not come in until March and this would allow for the most accurate budget possible. Once a budget is voted on the district treasurer sends it to the towns to put in the warrant. BBRSD had consultants come in and advised them to do that timeline.

Mrs. Grill proposed changing Berlin capital HVAC to the amount that matches the quote. She asked the school committee members how they felt. Mr. Totman wanted to know if they did accept the town budget what it would look like for the district. He proposed another meeting on Friday and reaching out to the Finance Committee. Ms. Sequeira noted Tahanto is only able to cut certain items due to graduation requirements. They are able to cut sports, (coaches, transportation(\$30k)) Boylston would have cuts as well if the school committee accepts the town number. To cover the discrepancy in the Berlin budget \$730k would need to be cut over the entire budget. Tahanto has around 35% of students from Berlin and 65% from Boylston. Ms. Sequeira gave examples of what items that could be cut without interfering with requirements, which included cutting all clubs, cutting fall athletics, cutting winter and spring sports for a total of \$123,600. Heads impact what happens in the school, but the salaries are the largest chunk of money. Middle school language would not happen if that position is cut. She has spoken to her staff about what this could mean in a worst-case scenario.

Mr. Campbell explained it is not possible to cut anything at BMS, no stipends, no sports, no department heads. BMS has two teachers per grade. There would be five kids going out of the district at five times the cost if the Bridges Program closed. The only thing is art and music. He cannot run the school with those cuts. Mrs. Grill shared she wanted to vote on the same budget and provide more information aside from HVAC.

A member of the public explained people didn't know to go out to vote. They suggested to go back with the same budget and parents would show up. Ms. Stacey Plunkett, President of the Stags, echoed not to change the budget, but to give out more information and to let people know why they need to go out to vote. She would help to inform Berlin residents.

The school committee did not want to take the Berlin budget. BMS could not run. It was discussed they would meet at 4pm on Friday to discuss the budget with a business item for budget vote if needed and invite the Finance Committees.

A motion was made to vote to reapprove the March 19, 2024 School Committee budget as stated less 400k for HVAC from Berlin memorial capital. Motion approved by Mrs. Lori Hart and seconded by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti, 6-0, motion passes

Information was requested about out of district students. The cost of an out of district special ed student can have an expense on the school district ranging around 85K per child, which is based on the unique needs of that child. Ms. Fitzpatrick noted the district by law has to pay for the students. If the Bridges Program closed it would cost five times more. Money for special ed is used for the Bridges Program to support students. Ms. Costello will work on the information sheet and will connect with the PTO to see if they can set up a phone chain to get people to come to vote. It was also suggested to use the town rec departments to get the information out.

A motion was made by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti to amend the motion on the floor that it is contingent that there is a meeting within 48 hours with a formal invitation to the Finance Committee of Berlin. Amended motion was seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, 6-0, amendment passes

The town of Berlin has 45 days to schedule a town meeting, where the town will revote on budget.

- Tahanto Student Council Representative - *Miss Emerson Walsh - no update*

VII. Business Items

- Approval to accept various donations to pay for BBRSD Nature's Classroom Field Trip - **Vote** - Mrs. Cinthia Sykes reviewed the donations from the music fundraiser, PYOP, pasta dinner, penny wars, raffle and bake sale, which all goes into the student council activities account. Mrs. Degliaberti spoke about the BMS calendar raffle, which 5% goes back to the state because it needed a permit. There was also a Papa Gino's event and donation from Berlin Insurance Company to cover the cost of the bus and excess. **Motion to approve BES/BMS donation to class of 2031 \$4,034, 5-0 motion passes. A motion to approve \$5908.70 and excess funds stay with the class made by Mrs. Lisa Mair and seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti abstained, 4-0, motion passes. Motion to approve donation of \$472 raised from PTO bake sale used for student council made by Mrs. Lisa Mair, seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, and Mrs. Degliaberti abstained, 4-0, motion passes.**
- Approval of fundraising request by 4th and 5th grade music parents at the end of year concert at Tahanto - **Vote No Vote needed and will be handled through LINK. LINK and BES PTO are going to sell snacks at the concert. Originally done by a group of parents.**
- Policies: postponed to May 28 votes
 - **EHB** - Data and Records Retention - **Vote**
 - **JIJC** - Student Use of Technology in Schools - **Vote**
 - **KDC** - Community Use of Digital Resources - **Vote**
 - **KDCB** - District Website and Social Media- **Vote**
 - **ILD**- Student Submission to Educational Surveys and Research - **First Read**
- School Committee Calendar 2024-2025 - **First Read - One area to adjust, first meeting in May regular meeting.**

A motion was made to enter into executive session and plan to return to open session. Roll call: Ms. Mair, Ms. Degliaberti, Mrs. Hart, Mr. Totman, Mrs. Grill, all ayes.

VIII. Executive Session - 7:00pm

- To discuss strategy and respond to potential litigation against the district and to return to open session

The committee entered back into Open Session at 9:28pm

- Superintendent evaluation subcommittee - *Mrs. Lori Hart* - The School Committee was given evaluation documents. Mrs. Hart explained the color coding went with Ms. Costello's color coding. There are guides and tips for completing the evaluations. On May 8th the committee would get a link to their self-evaluations. The answers will not show who wrote them. Comments are optional. Mrs. Hart also gave instructions for the Superintendent evaluation. The only place

required is page 2. Members need to comment if they choose a selection other than proficient. On May 14th the Superintendent evaluation goes out and will be due on May 22nd, 2024.

Ms. Costello informed the committee what she added on to her goals to include time spent with the administrative team, book study, and wishes she could have done more walkthroughs. All new items are bolded. For the second goal around community engagement what she attended is listed. For goal three she put the reflection on page 12. Ms. Hart noted the evaluation is based on the goals She credited Ms. Costello's work on the goals document. Ms. Costello appreciated the feedback and knows there are things to do to get better. Part of her role has been getting used to different chairs and figuring out what that is. She is excited for next year's goals.

- School choice - *Mrs. Julie Lee* - Ms. Lee requested to open up the discussion about school choice. She informed the group that 12 kids for Assabet all got in and all from Berlin. There are three for Mass Academy and two have indicated private school. The Assabet number will be paid by the town. There would be 89 kids to 62 kids from 8th to 9th grade. Mr. Totman mentioned how could they take school choice kids if there are teachers to teach them.

Mr. Totman felt that Ms. Sequeira was needed to be present to speak to adding any school choice students. Her opinion last time was to take none. June 1st is when DESE needs to be notified by. Mrs. Lee noted middle school students were the leads in the high school level play. She felt the numbers are needed in the district and that the budget would pass. It was discussed that if it does not pass a lot of people may leave the district. Sports are one of the biggest reasons why students leave after 8th grade.

Mrs. Lee made a motion to amend the original school choice vote by striking the number zero from Tahanto Regional Middle/High School and inserting 34 total seats, which reflects what was originally presented. Approved by Mrs. Meagan Grill and seconded by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti

Mr. Michael Totman moved to table the motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Lori Hart, 5-1, motion tabled

Mrs. Grill motioned to adjourn at 9:59pm, all in favor.

IX. Upcoming Meeting

- May 28, 2024, zoom meeting
- June 4, 2024

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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