



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, January 14, 2025, 5:00 pm

Tahanto Regional Middle/High School

Multi Purpose Room

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

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Due to technical issues this meeting may not always stream live, but we will make every attempt to do so and to record the meeting for future posting.

The items listed on the agenda may be discussed out of order as the Chair decides due to potential scheduling and timing requirements.

Present: School Committee: Mr. Michael Totman, Chair, Mrs. Meagan Grill, Vice-Chair; Mrs. Lori Hart, District Clerk, Mrs. Jessica Deglialberti, Mrs. Lisa Mair, Mrs. Elisabeth Mancini

Administration: Mr. Albert G. Ganem Jr., Interim Superintendent; Ms. Nicole Bilotta, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, Mr. Richard Cameron, Tahanto Assistant Principal; Mr. John Campbell, Berlin Memorial Principal; Ms. Jannel Fitzpatrick, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Ms. Renee Legendre, Tahanto Assistant Principal; Mr. Aaron Osborne, Director of Finance and Operations; Ms. Lisa Sequeira, Tahanto Middle/High School Principal; Mr. Joseph Sposato, Interim Director of Technology; Ms. Sally Stukuls, Director of Curriculum and Grants 6-12; Ms. Cinthia Sykes, Boylston Elementary Principal;

Also Present: Matthew Dowd and members of the public

I. Call to Order - Mr. Michael Totman called the meeting to order at 5:00pm

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Football Team Super Bowl Recognition - Mr. Albert Ganem recognized the Football team on their accomplishment of winning the Super Bowl Championship for the third year in a row and presented them with certificates.

IV. Public Comments -

Ms. Mara Goulet, BES parent, read her statement that included concerns over the failing class proposal with sports and extracurricular activities. She expressed concerns that school can be hard for students and these activities can be the only thing getting the students to come to school. Her husband and Tahanto teacher, Mr. Joel Goulet, finished reading her statement, which included concerns that it may have consequences for unconventional students. They hope the committee and superintendent will look more into the proposal.

Mr. Bill Whitehead, Boylston resident and Tahanto teacher, encouraged the committee to look at something in between for language for students who fail a class. This could be to get extra help or tutoring and the district would help support them and get them back where they need to be.

Ms. Kristen Nelson, Boylston resident and Tahanto teacher offered her perspective and felt it was an inequitable policy proposal. She expressed that the policy says it's unacceptable to fail when many of us have failed in things before. She noted students may not choose the harder classes if failure meant they couldn't participate in their extracurricular activities. She would like them to be given the opportunity to improve.

Ms. Erin Kane, Boylston parent, spoke about enrichment programming being needed in the school. She noted her experience with her son not being challenged in his school work. She shared previous experience at BES with enrichment work.

Student Elisabeth Shocar, Captain of the girls soccer team shared her accomplishments at Tahanto while on the soccer team and that she took cp classes her first year. She noted struggling with one of her classes and the issues that the proposal would have made if it were in place. She explained there are kids who work hard in and out of school and this would create added stress.

V. Consent Agenda Motion to pass the consent agenda made by Mrs. Lori Hart and seconded by Mrs. Lisa Mair, All in favor, Vote 6-0, motion passes.

- December 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Warrant

VI. Reports

- **Chair's Report** - *Mr. Michael Totman* - nothing to report
- **Superintendent of Schools Report** - *Mr. Albert Ganem Jr.* -
 - o Student Council Representative - *Matthew Dowd* - Matthew informed the group about upcoming midterms. The Student Council had a stall day that raised funds for the special olympics. He noted some co-op sports teams like the Hudson hockey team that students participate in have been doing very well.
 - o Technology Update -
 - Introduction of Interim Director of Technology, *Mr. Joseph Sposato* - Mr. Ganem introduced the new Interim Director of Technology, Joseph Sposato. He will be working with principals for their needs for the remainder of the year. He previously worked with Mr. Ganem at Venerini Academy. Mr. Sposato thanked the group for the opportunity to work as the Interim Director of Technology and explained he is working with the team on developing a technology three to five

year plan. They will also be working on online forms for students, staff, and parents. Mrs Grill requested cell service issues be looked into.

- Agenda Posting - new page to include rss feeds - nothing reported
- Website: update on broken links/calendar updates/formatting issues - Mr. Ganem introduced Ms. Meghan Kinnard and her work on the website. She is head of marketing for a PR marketing firm. She worked with Mr. Ganem on the refresh of the Venerini Academy website. Her primary focus for the website is turning it into a more user friendly platform. She noted some of the issues with the site and how she is using the existing website platform to create a more structured website. She showed the existing Tahanto site and then the new Tahanto test site. She has worked on correcting the site navigation and added a more familiar structure to the Tahanto home page with some text at the top and quick links. She has also updated the look of the calendar and made it easier to use. Mrs. Grill noted her work is excellent and asked to add in athletic events to the calendar so students can see when they are happening. Mr. Ganem thanked Ms. Kinnard for her work and they plan to have it ready in the next couple of months. Mr. Sposato noted Arbiter will be integrated into the new site.

- o Berlin PM Bus Routes - Mr. Ganem thanked the School Committee, Mr. John Campbell, Mr. Paul Mara, Mr. Bob Holmes and the students for the work and transition of the afternoon bus routes. The changeover was a smooth process.
- o Strategic Plan - At the next meeting Ms. Pam Gould will join in and introduce steps for the strategic plan. It will be a living document for everything the district will need. noted It will work along with the Portrait of a Graduate work. She will meet with the admin team in February prior to the meeting.
- o MSBA Update - Mr. Ganem is working on paperwork with Mr. Dan Ayala and Mr. Aaron Osborne. The plan for the BES roof as of now is the summer of 2026.
- o Mr. Ganem addressed the data breach with the Powerschool platform and how it happened across the entire country. It was on the companies' end and Mr. Mara and Mr. Sposato have been on top of it.

- **Administrator Updates -**

- o TAH Assistant Principal/Safety Liaison - District-wide Safety Update - Mr. Rich Cameron (15 min) - Mr. Cameron is the newly appointed safety liaison and is working with principals, fire and police departments from both towns. Mr. Cameron noted working with Mr. Rob Pezzella and conducting a full safety audit. He went through the updates they have so far. There are four big pieces they are working on to start. . comprehensive review of protocols - he noted the close relationships they district has with law enforcement and the time and work they put in. They have worked on threat protocols and have reviewed it with BBRSD staff. It is a collaborative practice that BBRSD works on with law enforcement. When police come to site they are in charge and the district follows their lead. He noted parents need to be contacting police outside of school hours, if there are any concerns. All schools have student response plans. Mr. Cameron noted the schools are prepared if an event were to occur.

Item two is standardizing resources. The district does monthly drills that are held with local emergency responders and have been reviewed with staff. He talked about the

importance of communications going out and unified messages through the schools. They have updated messages that can go out to families and have made sure they have the appropriate inventory incase of an incident.

Item three has to do with proactive education and communication strategies for students and families - They want to continue to educate students and staffs on best practices as their worlds evolve. They have recently had a cyber safety and bullying presentation by the district attorney. The district wants to prepare the students for difficult things that come up. He noted how the counselors are phenomenal in getting information out to families and providing support.

The fourth area includes targeted opportunities. BBRSD will have two separate training sessions for CPR/AED training and they will have a Stop the Bleed training through Boylston. Safety care crisis prevention will continue to run. They still plan to do a cyber presentation for parents in the coming months

- TAH Principal - *Ms. Lisa Sequeira* - Mrs. Sequeira highlighted an interdisciplinary opportunity that was done with seventh grade art and sciences classes working together on animal adaptability to their environment. The Berlin Conservation Commission came to establish active community participation among the students, as well as leadership opportunities. A survey was sent out to parents to help tailor their offerings and many expressed interest in business, carpentry and use of media center. Ms. Sequeira is talking with Mr. Ganem on opportunities to do so. There are some classes that will need to get approved in the coming months. She is working with her mentor on transnational learning services to see what opportunities are available for students. Matt Dowd also spoke about opportunities to use the control board in the auditorium.
- BES Principal - *Ms. Cinthia Sykes* - Ms. Sykes shared highlights on math in the school. They are doing “Math on the Move”, which are problems parents can do with kids while they wait in student drop off and are trying to incorporate walkers and students on the bus. Examples include counting tires, students in a car, etc. She also shared the WINN (What I Need Now) groups and the teachers are having parent volunteers to come in and help in the classrooms. Mr. Ganem commended the work Ms. Sykes is doing and the added time she is putting into learning.
- BMS Principal - *Mr. John Campbell* - Mr. Campbell shared work that Ms. Tia Trapasso is doing with the student council with the focus of increasing independence and advocating for self and others. They reached out to students to see how they felt about MCAS as part of state reporting. Mr. Ganem noted the work LINK is doing. Mr. Totman invited the student council to present at a school committee meeting if they wanted. BMS currently uses Rocket math second through fourth grade.
- **Business Office Update** - *Mr. Aaron Osborne*
 - FY25 and FY26 Budget Update - Mr. Osborne spoke about FY25 and providing reports that are meaningful to the school committee. In the past he has consolidated into each of the major areas. He noted there is some level of cleanup that needs to be done with the accounts. He hopes in the future to create a central office cost center and going into a

single line item instead of three. Mr. Osborne noted small encumbrances in salary items, and is going to work on a manual method to encumber salaries. He plans to look into why some encumbrances were entered previously. Mrs. Hart thanked Mr. Osborne for the work on the budget report and presentation he provided to them and how it was easy to understand.

Mr. Osborne and Mrs. Ganem met with the committees in Berlin and Boylston and shared the budgets with them. Late January is when state numbers will come out. Out of district move-ins are included in the cost to the district if done before April 1st. If a student moves out after April 1st they stay on books for the next year. If they move in after the district they came from pays for them.

Mr. Osborne spoke on health insurance increases and contract negotiations and increases they have seen in other districts. The transportation bid goes out January 15th. He will meet with Mrs. Fitzpatrick about special education transportation and Vanpool. There are a high number of agency hires who cost more than the regular hiring process.

As of now he has the FY26 budget looking like \$26, 449,485, a 6.68% increase from FY25. Mr. Osborne reviewed where some of the items driving the budget increase. The increase seen in Berlin is due to agency hires. Boylston out of district tuitions have changed which is why it is lower. Salaries and Employee Health insurance are a big part of the cost. He reviewed the budget drivers for each school for the next year and where specific increases and decreases have come from. There has been an uptick in subs in the area. The operating assessments and capital requests were also reviewed for each school within the district. Mr. Osborne has shared the debt schedules with the towns. He will be continuing to refine the budget and the next big update will be at the end of February. There may be the potential to put in a SOI for BMS roof after the BES one is complete. They would look into what solar entails, as well. They are hoping this is the highest end of the budget, but there are still some unknowns they are working on. They will be looking at all contracts with the district and costs.

- **Subcommittee Updates**

- Student Success and Technology Subcommittee - *Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti* - no update.
- Budget and Facility Subcommittee - *Mrs. Meagan Grill* - Mrs. Grill noted they were thinking of moving the budget hearing/vote. Mr. Totman explained they had originally done that because Berlin had asked. They agree they would rather vote on a more concrete budget and would talk to the town.
- Superintendent Search Subcommittee - *Mrs. Lori Hart* - Mrs. Hart Recommend MASC to guide the superintendent search. Items that drove their decision were the comparison in cost, services offered and prior experiences with help from both agencies.
- Policy Subcommittee - *Mr. Michael Totman* - no policy update.

- Any business unforeseen by the chair within 48 hours of the meeting

VII. Business Items

- Approval of Superintendent Search Agency - **Vote Needed - Motion for the approval of the superintendent search agency to be MASC as the subcommittee has suggested made by**

Mrs. Meagan Grill and seconded by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti, Discussion: Mrs. Degliaberti shared NESDEC was more A la carte items which amounted to a higher cost. **All in favor, Vote 6-0, motion passes.**

- Approval of the Sweet and Savory Club and club stipend - Tahanto - Ms. Lisa Sequeira -**Vote Needed** - Two Tahanto students presented the club to the group. The club is to help teach kids how to cook on their own and be more creative with cooking. It is not something everyone is taught. They already have ideas about PTO fundraising and grants to get funding, in addition to reaching out to local supermarkets. They are thinking of potential student dues to help with the cost of materials. The club is in line with the wellness policy because it is after hours and they will also pay close attention to allergies.- **A motion to approve the Sweet and Savory Club and the club stipend made by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti and seconded by Mrs. Lisa Mair**, Discussion: Mrs. Mair shared she was very much in favor of the club. The students have an advisor and there is a standard club stipend, that would be prorated for the year. **All in favor, Vote 6-0, motion passes.**
- Approval of the Student Competency Determination (MCAS) - **Vote Needed** - **A motion to approve the Student Competency Determination as recommended in the drive made by Mrs. Lori Hart and seconded by Mrs. Meagan Grill**, Discussion: Mr. Ganem explained they needed a vote to know what direction to go in going forward. Mrs. Stukuls explained MCAS will still be used for accountability ratings and there will still be scholarships associated with it. The state wants to know what will be used as a graduation requirement instead. BBRSD Administration had three recommendations. Proposal A was to use MCAS as a graduation requirement for this year and see what the guidance going forward was in the summer. This is the option administration felt was best for this year. The other two options, with included discontinuing the MCAS graduation requirement along with some other details were shared with the committee. The vote is only for 2024-2025 school year. There are other districts that are continuing to require it. BBRSD administration is not concerned about it. Ms. Sequiera wants to let families know sooner about the intentions of the MCAS tests going forward. **Vote 6-1, motion passes.** Mrs. Degliaberti asked for communication on the importance of the test still going forward.
- Policies -
 - JE - Attendance - **Vote Needed** - Ms. Legendree requested keeping JE as it currently reads for the remainder of the school year to give sufficient time for the administration to further review the most recent state recommendations. It is something they can continue to uphold and then take a deeper dive in after. Making a change in January would be very difficult. There are excused absences and reasons why the child is absent. There are letters mandated to be given out after a certain number of days. There are only three reasons with the state to be given out for excused absences. Mr. Ganem explained if students are going to an appointment he hopes they come back. Four hours in school is considered present for the day. Mrs. Sequeira shared that the policy needs to go along with Massachusetts law and BBRSD is not in line. The group explained you do not need a doctor note for a fever. It is a reason they are out, but it's not excused. They determined there was no vote actually needed to keep it the same. Mrs. Grill requested voting in May for the next school year.
 - JICA - Student Dress Code - **Vote Needed** - The recommendations were discussed at the December 10th meeting. The proposed version is the most reflective of the current three schools' handbook policies. **Motion to approve JICA as recommended made by Mrs.**

Jessica Degliaberti and seconded by Mrs. Lisa Mair, All in favor, Vote 6-0, motion passes.

- Approval of the Tahanto Handbook - **Vote Needed** - The administration has a couple proposals of how to go forward and has had many thoughtful conversations on the topic of failing and extra curricular activities. Ms. Sequeira noted participation in activities is essential. She went over each option. The first is to keep it as is. The second is if a student is failing one course and is participating in any extracurricular activities, to support academic success the student must attend ACE Club and/or an extra help session two times per week until they are no longer failing that course during the next quarter or interim report whichever comes first. If a student misses 2 consecutive sessions, the student will meet with the coach and administration, and if a student continues to miss sessions after this meeting the student will not be able to continue participating in extracurricular activities.

The administration keeps a close watch on the students and makes sure they are progressing as they should be and not failing. Mr. Ganem noted colleges are looking for well rounded students and not just academics. The group discussed the number of consecutive sessions missed and senior privileges. Senior privileges are assessed quarterly. Mrs. Hart explained she does not want to be punitive to kids and appreciates the proposal by the administration. ACE is an after school peer tutoring club. Originally there were a lot of middle school students having a harder time transitioning and then would get help from upper grade level students, which transformed over the years. Mr. Totman made suggestions to include removing the word consecutive, clarifying continuing to miss 4 total and parent notification. This proposal will help formalize additional supports for the one allowed failure. Mr. Totman requested to see data after it was implemented.

Motion to approve the Tahanto handbook amended with the following language: if a student is failing one course and is participating in any extracurricular activities, to support academic success the student must attend ACE Club and/or an extra help session two times per week until they are no longer failing that course during the next quarter or interim report whichever comes first. If a student misses 2 sessions, the student will meet with the coach and administration and parents will be notified, and if a student continues to miss sessions after this meeting the student will not be able to continue participating in extracurricular activities made by Mrs. Meagan Grill and seconded by Mrs. Lisa Mair, All in favor, Vote 6-0, motion passes.

- VIII. Executive Session I. and will not return to open session** - Motion to enter into Executive Session and will not return to open session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose (3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining (BBEA CBA) and litigation (Konisky vs. BBRSD) if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining and litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares and
- IX. Executive Session II.** - pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose (1) to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual made by Mrs. Lori Hart, second by Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti, Roll call: Mrs. Elisabeth Mancini, Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti, Mrs. Lisa Mair, Mrs. Lori Hart, Mrs. Meagan Grill, Mr Michael Totman, All aye, **Vote 6-0 motion passes. Executive session entered at 8:25pm**

X. Upcoming Meeting

- February, 11, 2024 Regular Meeting

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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