

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING
Joel Barlow High School - Library Learning Commons
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February 27, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.
Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Johnston (remote; left meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m.), Graziano, Thompson, Parkin, Denny, O'Brien (remote), Stinson

Absent: Pampel

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Almeida, Scrofani, D'Agostino

Others: 2 staff and members of the public, the recording secretary and the videographer

CALL TO ORDER

C. Graziano called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the Minutes of the February 12, 2024 Region 9 Board of Education Special Meeting with the following revision: on page 1, in the Motion approving the January 30, 2024 Minutes, strike “and, G. Denny was not absent, she was in attendance and departed early from the meeting,” should be stricken and “was absent entirely” be added. (Parkin, Stinson). Approved. 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

K. O'Brien thanked Dr. Pierson Ugol and Dr. McKinnon for their efforts on the pathways for the Art 1 curriculum.

AGENDA CHANGE

C. Graziano asked that per Dr. McKinnon's request the meeting agenda be changed.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education amend the Agenda for tonight's meeting by switching the order of Items V. A. and Item V. B. (Stinson, Parkin). Approved. 7-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: RCx PROJECT UPDATE AND CONSIDERATION FOR PROGRESS PAYMENT

C. Graziano gave a recap of the RCx project, which was approved unanimously at the June 20, 2023 Region 9 Board of Education meeting. Facilities & Operations Manager, Mike D'Agostino, gave a slide presentation of the RCx project that included background information, timeline and costs. He said the

project could result in projected yearly electrical energy usage reduction of approximately 8-12% (\$24-36K) and a projected annual oil consumption decrease of 10.4-14.6%; the loan will have 0% interest over five years; net cost will be \$210,636.79. Discussion ensued regarding savings, debt service, and on-bill loan payments. BOE members had questions about: individual room controls; useful life of equipment, when energy bill will first be affected by agreement; M. D'Agostino replied that debt service is offset; loan payments will be added to monthly billing; individual controls will improve learning environments and reduce carbon footprint; useful life of equipment should be roughly 15-16 years; payments will appear on utility bill within two months; savings will occur because in face of increased energy costs, building will be more energy efficient and there is possibility of reduced oil usage.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept the On-Bill Municipal Financing Agreement for Project #CT23P01906168 from the Eversource Energy Retro Commissioning Program, and authorize the administration to sign the agreement in the amount of \$210,636.79 (Denny, Stinson). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept progress payment invoice #J-1248 from New England Energy Controls in the amount of \$119,691.21 for automated building controls, with funds coming from the Capital Fund. (Stinson, Denny). Approved 7-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SUPERINTENDENT PROPOSED 2024-2025 REGION 9 OPERATING BUDGET

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, addressed the following topics 1). Strategic Planning Investment - STEM; 2). Art 1; 3). Student Course Requests; and, 4). Students Exiting JBHS. Questions received from Board of Education members and public before 1:00 p.m. today were answered in Google sheet.

Strategic Planning Investment - STEM: Dr. McKinnon shared overview of courses currently offered at JBHS in Engineering, Computer Science, Technology, as well as career clusters/pathways organized according to the State of Connecticut, that he recommends we explore. Recommended State clusters/pathways for further exploration are Information Technology/Programming and Software Development Pathway, Web and Digital Communications Pathway; Science Technology, Engineering, & Math/Engineering, Design, and Development Pathway,

Building on current course offerings in these areas and adding new courses, these three distinct pathways could make up a new Barlow STEM Academy. Dr. McKinnon noted that this is only half of this initiative, and we need to look at other clusters of Business, Marketing, Media. He said that students completing these pathways would receive acknowledgement of their achievement, e.g., distinction on transcripts. Dr. McKinnon then presented current floorplan of technology and business classrooms/space and proposed a two-phase redesign of area – short-term \$85K plan and long-term \$75K plan. He said short-term building improvements could begin in Summer, 2025.

Questions and discussion followed: consider overarching goal to view capital planning comprehensively and cycle in which to do that, i.e., start with STEM, then move to other areas; plan is exciting, responsive and positive; how will Barlow STEM Academy concept affect overall graduation requirements; where does Math and Science coursework fit into recommended pathways; will short-term \$85K design be obsolete by future, long-term work; what does “coaching” in the \$75K plan cover; benefits of combining \$85K and \$75K into one \$160K amount that can be used across both short- and long-term initiatives; opportunity to reinvigorate UCONN Early College Experience; re-location of Business classes; need to understand current student demand for existing STEM classes, as well as what students *not* take a result of

increased STEM offerings to best manage future course offerings; holistic approach to area and simultaneous development of physical space and curriculum; ensure initial budget is allocated to both physical and curricular design; consider intersection of Art courses and STEM courses as STEM Academy pathways are developed.

Dr. McKinnon and Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Stepanie Pierosn Ugol, responded: they will review and coordinate graduation requirements; coaching is for possible teacher training; great student interest in business courses and they should be relocated to better support needs; interest in technology courses will grow when there are better pathways and improved space; they have already reached out to area schools who have renovated technology spaces and will continue to so. Dr. McKinnon appreciates flexibility that combining budgets for both phases allows and moved budgets for both phases into one budget line on budget worksheet.

Art I: Dr. McKinnon said they agree to remove Art 1 as a prerequisite for other art courses, while keeping Art I as an elective. Administration will analyze how to best communicate to students who have selected Art I for 2024-25 school year that Art I will remain, and other Art courses are now open to them. This change will not require significant budget investment.

Student Course Requests: Dr. McKinnon asked that questions regarding student course request questions be specific to a course, conflicts, etc. rather than a general request for data. C. Parkin asked if there are courses that are over- or under-subscribed, which helps refine course offerings and number of sections.. K. Thompson said the information is helpful to give directional insight into student course demand.

C. Graziano asked for a Motion to add to Discussion and Possible Action a new item regarding Art 1 course as a prerequisite for other art courses.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education amend the agenda for tonight’s meeting to include under Discussion and Possible Action item V.C. Review of Art 1 as a Prerequisite. (Stinson, Parkin). Approved. 6-0.

K. O’Brien asked if additional spots will be available in other Art classes to address any shifts in Art course requests as a result of removing the Art I pre-requisite. Dr. Pierson-Ugol said they will discuss a multi-step phase-in plan to execute this change.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education formally remove Art 1 as a prerequisite for other art classes. (Stinson, O’Brien). Approved. 6-0.

Director of Finance, Operations & Technology, S. Scrofani, displayed overall 2024-25 Student Course Request Tally. K. Thompson asked if any courses have received fewer than five student requests; S. Scrofani answered that it is too soon to confirm that. C. Parkin asked if courses could be “bucketed” by elective subject area, e.g., STEM, music, etc. to see where demand is. K. Thompson said it is important to look at overall, historical trends regarding course requests to plan future course offerings, what might be removed.

Students Exiting JBHS: Dr. McKinnon shared data for students exiting Barlow last year by grade: Grade 9 (rising Grade 10): four students left – 1 to Fairfield Prep, 1 to Fairfield Ludlowe, 1 outplacement, and 1 moved; Grade 10 (rising Grade 11): eighteen students left – 5 moved out of state, 5 moved out of district, 6 left for private school, 1 outplacement, 1 home schooled; Grade 11 (rising Grade 12): ten students left –

3 moved out of state, 2 moved out of district, 2 left for private school, 2 outplaced, 1 other). C. Graziano asked if we get root cause why students leave for other schools and Dr. McKinnon replied that they can drill down further into that question. Head of School and Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Mario Almeida, added that in grade 10-11, seven different students returned.

Two areas from last meeting actual historical spending growth over time (without debt service) and World Languages/ Latin and possible third language options. Dr. McKinnon said that languages will not change for 2024-25 school year.

K. Thompson noted that two questions in February 23 Budget Workshop minutes had not been addressed: actual historical spending growth over time (without debt service) and World Languages/Latin offering and possible third language options. Dr. McKinnon said World Language offerings will not change for coming school year, noting that there's a signal Latin is declining and the Curriculum Committee will look at this area for future planning. Dr. Pierson-Ugol said no financial resources are needed for this review.

A discussion followed that included: historical and upcoming debt service; historical per pupil expenditures; data as reported by CT.GOV EdSight; value of per pupil expenditure as a metric and one measure of ROI; need to discuss which metrics are important to parents and students, and how to measure them. K. O'Brien asked for metrics on how Academic Centers have helped students and can we expand access. C. Graziano asked if gym floors needed to be refinished every year. M. D'Agostino replied that the gym floors need to be refinished every year to provide anti-slip quality and build durability.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Stinson said he valued the thoughtful discussion tonight and is excited to be part of the Region 9 Board of Education.

K. Thompson asked when discussion about the Capital Plan will fit in to overall budget discussion.

C. Parkin said Facilities & Operations Committee should discuss.

C. Graziano suggested that the review of Capital Plan be included on agenda for next Region 9 Board of Education meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

J. Stinson made a Motion for Adjournment that was seconded by G. Denny. Hearing no objections, C. Graziano adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Submitted by Kathy Thompson
Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by Sarah Ota