



## **Burlington Board of School Commissioners Meeting Minutes**

**Hunt Middle School Library  
April 10, 2018**

### **Commissioners in Attendance:**

Martine Gulick, Stephen Carey, Mark Barlow, Jeff Wick, Clare Wool, Mike Fisher, Monika Ivancic, Liz Curry, Keith Pillsbury, Ryan McLaren, Eric Gorman, Isaac Jenemann, Anne Judson

**BSD Staff in Attendance:** Superintendent Obeng, Director Lavery, Director Spaulding, Director Curtis, Director Fuller, Director Phillips

### **1. Opening Items**

A. Welcome

Meeting called to order at 6:04 PM

Pledge of Allegiance followed by a Universal Welcome Greeting lead by Commissioner Ivancic

### **2. Agenda**

A. Approval of the Agenda

*Motion to amend the agenda to add items for Executive Session 1. Discuss a finding  
2. Confidential Attorney/client communication 3. Discuss a finding and possible board  
action*

*Commissioner Wick/Commissioner Fisher*

*Motion to approve agenda as amended*

*Commissioner Pillsbury/Commissioner Ivancic*

*Motion carries*

### **3. Public Comment**



#### A. Comments/Questions from the Public

Fran Brock President of BEA. Welcomes the newly restructured Burlington Board of Commissioners. Shared a report released by the Vermont NEA. The BEA has begun to codify their shared values and principles. Brock explained a few of the beliefs of the BEA and their responsibilities. Introduces Mark Van Buren

Mark Van Buren paraeducator at Hunt Middle School. Invites the Board to join the meditation on May 1.

Bailey Osborne was at a previous Board Meeting to discuss the challenges she faced due to health implications. She hopes to move forward together.

Kelly Brooks: parent of two at Flynn. She explains the Flynn support staff rallied around her daughter, and they were crucial to her daughters support strategies. She is asking the Board to settle the para contract quickly, and recognize that these professionals are crucial in closing the achievement gap.

Christina Erickson parent of 2nd grader at SA. She wishes for a new era for BSD where Superintendent, staff, students, and families are all representations of our District's mission. She hopes even the Board's tone will be civil when they speak to each other. She questions RIFs and opposes the restructuring of interventionists.

Jen Lucey parent of SA 3rd grader and incoming kindergartener. She believes the cuts and changes in structure to SA are detrimental. SA is the elementary school with the highest FRL students, EL students. SA needs continuity and stability.

Susan ClineLucey parent of SA 5th grader, 4th grader, and kindergartener. She highlights the work of SA magnet school coach. This coach is rooted in the theme of educational sustainability. Fearful that her children will lose curriculum due to classroom reconfiguration.



Cheyenne parent of kindergartener at SA. She is speaking in opposition to the reconfiguration of intervention models. She shared a teacher perspective about the demographics of SA and the intervention model.

Joanna Grossman parent of Champlain Elementary 2nd grader. Speaking about hypothetical changes that she has heard about a potential new roadway. She shared a handout with questions about the proposed changes.

Helen Hossley, Ward 7. She believes she's been underrepresented in her Ward. She is keenly interested in the data that was used to determine that we needed new classroom space. She suggests that Ira Allen be used to restore classrooms. She is opposed to action that does not include current public input.

Karen Rubin read a poem "Liberty" by Janet Wong and spoke about the need to disagree without seeing those that disagree as evil.

Former Commissioner Kat Kleman is disturbed by trends such as last week's motion to disturb contractually RIF process. She believes it represents a personal agenda to discount and disturb. She sees one person qualified to run a school district. She advises the Board to hold accountable themselves and their employee.

Valorie Esposito parent of 1st grader at SA. Welcomes and thanks the service of the new Board members. Equality does not equal equity. She agrees that one size does not fit all.

Chris Reinhart hopes for a day that we do not have to point out who is in the room based on how they look and not judged by their character. He says, diversity starts in the marketplace of ideas. It has to do with freedom of expression. He does not believe that it is the Board's role to endorse ideology, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. He believes that the climate at BHS is divisive and toxic.

Michelle Clark welcomes and thanks the new board. Shared details about her income, net pay, and the price paid into health insurance.



Sherry Hilliard is a parent and paraeducator. She has been a para in the Burlington School District for just a year. She shared that she basically just works for healthcare, but she loves her classroom and loves her job.

Carolyn Hanson is a parent of a rising 9th grader at BHS. She explained that the registration process was confusing. The information about biology change often, and in the end biology was cancelled for freshmen. She is concerned about the communication coming from the high school. Her question to the Board and Superintendent, if kids are able to do the work and recommended to take honors and AP classes, are they able to do them?

Public comment closes at 7:01 PM.

#### B. Board Reflection

Commissioner Ivancic shared that many of her questions as a parent echo the questions of parents of SA that were brought to the Board tonight.

Commissioner Carey thanked the public for sharing their thoughts about intervention structures. Commissioner Carey assured the public that during the time he has spent in the high school, he has been impressed by student morale.

Commissioner Pillsbury appreciated the comments from the public. He shared that his story includes the teachers that made a difference in his life.

Commissioner Gulick attempted to summarize that she suspects there has been miscommunication between the stakeholders in the how, not the why, decisions are made.

Board reflections closed at 7:07

#### **4. Chair's Report**



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Chair Wool deferred to Commissioner Curry to share information regarding the Emergency Board Meeting.

A. Regarding April 1st Emergency Board Meeting

[An Op-Ed by Commissioner Curry](#)

## **5. Consent Agenda**

A. March 13, 2018

B. March 20, 2018

C. March 29, 2018

D. April 1, 2018

*Motion to table the consent agenda.*

*Motion carries.*

## **6. Student Commissioners Report**

A. [BHS Public Issues and World Affairs Class Presentation on school safety.](#)

Commissioner Fisher wondered who the formal incident command is at the high school. *Each building and site has an incident command.*

The Superintendent explained to students that we are currently in progress to explore 5 new strategies other than the eminent threat model.

Representative Jenemann asked when the new actions would be implemented. To which the Superintendent explained that students should expect to see changes at the start of the next school year.

## **7. Board Report**

A. Negotiations Acknowledgment:

*This past week, an interim agreement was reached with the paraeducator union that established rates for health insurance premiums and HRA benefits. The interim agreement is a temporary agreement that will remain in place until the negotiations process is completed. Both sides compromised to reach this agreement, and we are thankful for the union's participation. The next step in the paraeducator negotiations is mediated fact finding which is scheduled to occur on May. Mediated fact finding means that we will begin the day in mediation and only proceed to fact finding if the*



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*mediation does not produce a settlement. The Board is optimistic that a mediated settlement can be reached, especially in light of the progress both sides made in reaching the interim agreement.*

## **8. Superintendent's Report**

### A. [BHS ReEnvisioning Recommendation](#)

*Motion to accept the recommendation from the ReEnvisioning Committee*

*Commissioner McLaren/Commissioner Carey*

Commissioner Curry heard a concern at an NPA meeting that struck her. The concern was surrounding a gym with classrooms due to noise concerns. Director Spaulding explained that there are still design implications that will need to be discussed and worked out.

Commissioner Curry has a specific question about how noise concerns will be addressed. To which Director Spaulding responded that there will be acoustical treatments.

Commissioner Barlow thanked everyone involved in the work that went into this process. Commissioner Barlow would like us to consider offsetting bonding with a serious effort to engage community members and businesses for donations. Ms. Stein did explain that in the recommendation there was an inclusion of identifying someone to aid in fundraising. Commissioner Barlow followed up to find out if there has been any conversation with the city about their bonding proposals.

Superintendent Obeng explained that the city knows, but does not have an official message.

Commissioner Fisher questioned the impact to the Tech Center. Director Spaulding explained it would also be included in renovations. Superintendent Obeng also added that there is potential legislation for Tech Centers, which might give us an opportunity to leverage funding for that aspect of the renovations. Director Spaulding did add that the Tech Center has been fortunate enough to receive upgrades over the years due to that funding.



Commissioner Fisher also asked about the staff involvement up until this point. Director Spaulding assured that there would be a great deal of involvement to get to the next steps in finalizing the design leading up to the bond.

Representative Jenemann is curious about salvaging buildings to offset costs and potentially produce revenue. Director Spaulding said that as of yet, those conversations have not come up.

Director Spaulding explained the level of design that goes into the pre-bond work is not as extensive that happens as what happens after the bond vote. Typically even engineers do not come in until after the bond vote. In response to Commissioner Pillsbury's question as to if we are rushing this process, Director Spaulding explained that the District has been working on the plan for BHS since 2013.

Commissioner McLaren challenges anyone who thinks this Board is rushing this process to sit in his chair, and try to get through that building. He expressed that our students deserve better than that. He also asked about access to the campus by students during construction. In response, Director Spaulding explained that the wrap-around design would allow for access during different phases of construction.

Commissioner Wick does not want to slow this process down, but he does not want to move forward without first consulting with the city.

Commissioner Curry asked about energy efficiency. Director Spaulding responded that the construction would follow guidelines of the Collaborative for High Performance Schools.

Director Spaulding explained that assuming a bond vote this November is approved, construction will be completed August/September 2021.

*Commissioner Curry makes a friendly amendment to approve the motion with the condition that staff return for a more extensive presentation about infrastructure and pricing. Commissioner McLaren accepted the friendly amendment to his original motion.*

*Motion carries.*



## B. [Capital Plan Update - Early Education](#)

Commissioner Ivancic questions the appropriation of the approved bonds.

Director Spaulding explained wanted they initially imagined the Ira Allen building for remodeling, but in looking at the plans to do this work, this does not provide swing space and cost is associated. The bond that went out for voters last year went out for \$ 19 m because the District already has the capacity for \$2 m for every 2 years.

Commissioner Ivancic is hearing from constituents about this impending construction. Director Spaulding explained there is a process to get to these specific points.

Commissioner Wick asked if the drive through Champlain Elementary necessary. Director Spaulding explained that this is also to resolve congestion in front of Champlain Elementary. This serves to fulfill two needs the District has: to provide access to the new South End Early Learning building and provide a better drop-off arrangement for Champlain Elementary.

Commissioner Curry called the Board's attention to the presentation on January 10, 2017 which shows these plans. There has been many years of robbing the Property Services, including the million dollars that has come from Administrative staff- this makes us contrainstaint in the amount of time staff can spend vetting projects with the community. We have to balance the feelings of people thinking they are not being included to that of the urgency of needs.

Representative Jenemann inquired about the outdoor dining space design at Edmunds and the relation to assigned seating and school safety. Director Spaulding responded to say that it is a way to make the area more useful.

Commissioner Fisher is concerned that the community and staff have not been involved in the design, and parents are now hearing details that concern them. He suggests that there should be more involvement of the teachers and community members during the design phase. In the time between now and July, he requested Director Spaulding to go out and sell this plan.



Superintendent Obeng said that he is confident that staff will be excited and receptive when they see the plans laid out. Director Spaulding added again that these plans are not finalized, they are simply refined just enough to share with the Board. The next step is to continue refining through PTOs and NPAs.

Commissioner Gulick expressed the necessity and criticality of communication, and that having community members help with communication is free.

#### C. Routine Financial Updates Presentation

Director Lavery is explaining the Cash Flow Report, which is typically included in the Consent Agenda. In the absence of any questions, they do not typically get discussed. The point of tonight's discussion is for Director Lavery to explain this in more detail.

Commissioner McLaren commended Director Lavery on the Cash Flow Report as it is always a positive indication of the operation of the District.

#### D. [RIF/ Staffing Presentation](#)

*This presentation was produced by the Superintendent and staff to address the questions the Board posed regarding the RIF process.*

Superintendent Obeng asked folks to keep an open mind about this presentation.

Commissioner Carey asked for clarification about grant RIFs versus District RIFs. He wondered if they are two different contracts. Director Fuller explained that grant money shifts. While these folks are employed by the District, their positions are funded by grant funds. Often you will see a position on the RIF list, but you will not see the vacancy or new position being created. This is a contractual formula.

Commissioner Carey asked if there was a policy on how people are informed of their RIFs. Human Resources hand delivers these letters. Director Fuller explained that the Union has been exemplary in notifying folks in advance so as not to take people by surprise.

Superintendent Obeng asked Director Phillips to provide commentary surrounding the magnet coaches. The investment in the magnet coaches happened in 2016. Those



coaches were included in PD done around coaching. We are shifting our priorities to address the “what.” We are now at a place where we can move away from focusing on what we are teaching, and instead emphasize how we are teaching. In speaking with Principals Whitmore and Riley, there does need to be a reconfiguration done around the magnet themes.

Representative Jenemann wonders if individual faculty members are being let go from the District during this RIF process. As explained by Director Phillips, it is just a shift in positions. People are not losing their jobs, they are just reconfiguring positions.

*The magnet coaches are not included in the 12 interventionists that are being presented on.*

Commissioner Pillsbury explained he has seen Interventionists working with students in the classroom, and asked for the visual of how the new Coaches will appear. To this, Director Phillips explained that Coaches will be utilized in a capacity of ways.

Commissioner Curry thanked Director Phillips for the painstakingly lengths she has gone through to display her expertise. Her question is, with more resources, how would they be spent?

Director Phillips hypothetically explained that an attempt to assess something like that would take more data and analytics. Right now, she feels confident this new model will hold up successfully. Even if there was more money, we would do something different. Based on our research, we need to be doing something differently. EL would be the next place.

Commissioner McLaren asked if Director Phillips felt there was adequate PD time to support this new model. He asked what the Board could do to support additional Professional Development time. Director Phillips said we could always use more PD time.

Commissioner Carey shared that he is under the impression that there is 35%-45% of students showing up in the Tier 2 instruction. He asked what the typical make up is of



Tiers 1-3 instruction in the classroom. Does the equity index affect class size? Superintendent responded that it depends on the times.

Superintendent Obeng also explained that the research shows, based on our percentages we do need to address instructional challenges.

Superintendent Obeng clarified that both at the state and federal level, they have emphasized Coach models as being a successful practice and therefore provide funding incentives for schools to reach that.

Superintendent Obeng explained that the former plan was not implemented by the previous director. The program could've ended two years ago because he did not know whether the plan had sufficient time to prove successful. Now, we are at a place where the data and research has been done and we know what we need to do.

Commissioner Fisher is asking to see the data for the new model. Director Phillips explained that she has been trying to convey that message tonight that we are picking a model that is shown by research to be effective. We know by the students we have that are in need of intervention that there are needs not being met at Tier 1. High quality teachers directly impact student achievement. We've got to try something different. We are saying that we feel instructional coaching is a strategy we should try.

Commissioner Curry stated that this is exactly what Policy Governance is for. We are all acting like we are in the business of Director Phillips and Superintendent Obeng. We are hearing from teachers that boots on the ground is not working. We are hearing the need from the teachers the need for more core instruction. If we use Policy Governance we will set the metrics to ask for the data to see change. We don't have baselines until we build the metrics that we should be setting in Policy Governance. The role and benefit, instead of saying prove it, we have conversations about the policy itself to set the language to see where we want to go. To continue to question the validity and expertise of our staff is dysfunctional.



Director Phillips cited the Monitoring Report that we have put it out there that we wish to implement this. It is part of that very monitoring report, and therefore we will come back to say how we are doing with it.

Superintendent Obeng explained the Board cannot hold us accountable when they dismiss our efforts to bring new models. We don't get the opportunity to use our staff expertise and implement it how we see adequate. If I feel as a superintendent that we cannot be innovative, that's not why you hired us. The Board hired us (Executive Directors) to do the analysis, put forth strategies, and do the work. You have to give us an opportunity to actually implement the strategies.

Chair Wool asked for more consideration to communicate with Principals to drive these important messages. Superintendent Obeng concurred. He further suggested that we need the opportunity to continue working with our experts.

*Motion to table items 8E, 8F, 9, and 10*

*Commissioner McLaren/Commissioner Curry*

E. Commissioner's School Profile

F. Good News - International Programming Research-China

**9. Board Monitoring on its Own Policies**

A. Board Officers and Their Method of Selection (4.4)

**10. Meeting Evaluation and Follow Up**

A. Future Agenda Item Suggestions

**11. Executive Session**

A. Motion to consider Executive Session to discuss Contract Negotiations where premature disclosure to the public could put the District at a disadvantage and personnel matter

*Motion to enter Executive Session for a specific finding that premature general public knowledge of the topic to be discussed in Executive Session would clearly place the Board or a person involved at substantial disadvantage.*



*Commissioner Pillsbury/Commissioner Carey*

*Motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the Board*

*Commissioner Wick/Commissioner Fisher*

*Motion carries*

*Motion to leave Exec Session made by*

*Commissioner Barlow/Chair Wool*

*Motion carries*

*Motion to adopt the interim agreement between the district and the paraeducator union.*

*Commissioner Barlow/Commissioner Gulick*

*passed unanimously*

*Motion to adopt resolution relating to receipt of investigators report and follow up steps.*

*Commissioner Gulick/Commissioner Pillsbury*

*Passed unanimously*

Updated language for the last paragraph of the resolution: The Board hereby also hereby **directs** the Superintendent of Schools that he keep or put in place and continuously monitor proactive measures to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to preclude illegal discrimination from occurring at all levels of the Burlington School District into the future.

## **12. Adjournment**

A. Motion to Adjourn

Commissioner Ivancic/Commissioner Carey



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