

NOT FINAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE BOARD

BURLINGTON BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
Board Meeting Minutes
Hunt Middle School Library
December 11, 2017
6 PM

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. Opening Items

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

Commissioners:

Mark Barlow X, Liz Curry X, Susanmarie Harrington , Anne Judson X, David Kirk X, Kat Kleman X, Mark Porter X, Stephanie Seguino X, Jeff Wick X, Ryan McLaren X, Kathy Olwell X

Student Representatives:

Isabella Weston X
Isaac Jeneman X

Administration:

Yaw Obeng, Superintendent X
Brittany Nevins, Minute Recorder, Executive Assistant X
Stephanie Phillips, Senior Director Teaching & Learning
Nikki Fuller, Senior Director Human Resources & Equity Affairs
Nathan Lavery, Senior Director of Finance X
Marty Spaulding, Property Services Director
Laura Nugent, Student Support Services Director X

The Board wishes to recognize, welcome and thank those that are providing language interpretation of the Board proceedings. The Board's commitment that all children receive equitable academic services must ensure that New American parents are welcome and can attend meetings, understand the process and be actively engaged. Interpretation of proceedings honors, respects and values our

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New American parents and students. The Board asks the public and media to respect and understand the importance of this interpretation.

2. Approval of Agenda

- A. Chair Porter asked commissioners if anything on the consent agenda needs to be discussed.

No items were taken off of the consent agenda.

- B. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve agenda (Commissioner Seguino/ Commissioner Judson)

Commissioner Wick asked what Executive Session was about. He was concerned and looking for clarity.

Chair Porter states that he will bring forward language and context to Board members.

Commissioner Wick asked about Board reflection.

Chair Porter said there was an error in the agenda. Board reflection was supposed to be in. It will be added next time. It will be added next time.

Chair Porter asks for proper wording for executive session language from District lawyers to bring for future.

Passes Unanimously

3. Public Comment

- A. Comments/Questions from the Public

Fran Brock- President of the BEA. Mentions scheduling challenges. Mentions Superintendent contract and Board process. Testimony placed on file with the school district.

Tim Dull - Burlington homeowner. Paraprofessional in school district. Has worked at Flynn. Discusses challenge in pay and need for multiple jobs. Feels appreciated by parents, but not feeling appreciated by the school board. Testimony placed on file with the school district.

Geoff Bennett- Parent and teacher in neighboring school district. Concerned about rhetoric coming from Montpelier. Concerned about discussions around education funding and the use of the same metrics year after year.

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Clare Wool- Parent/volunteer. Mentions a Board Front Porch Forum post about the Superintendent contract renewal. Concerned about renewal of contract too quickly. She makes comparison to other contracts that are being settled at the same time.

Miriam Stoll- Parent- Mentions that Superintendent Obeng has done a great job at helping the Board not only understand the achievement gap but in starting to close it. She mentions a variety of examples, such as restorative practice as a strategy, BHS renovations, and fiscal management improvements. Asks that the Board be patient and asks that they see work come to fruition. She asks that they sign the contract and urge him to stay. Testimony placed on file with the school district.

Kyle Dodson- Parent- Also supports extension of Superintendent Obeng's contract. He is also in a position of leadership and recognizes the responsibility of a leader. He specifically mentions the financial aspects. Mentions the complexity of Burlington but also mentions that it is still a City and like all cities will have struggles. Superintendent Obeng is "suffering from the wounds of the past and has worked hard to heal these wounds." Asks the Board to look at how far we have come.

Dan Cunningham- Resident of Burlington. The Superintendent contract is not about how great of a job Superintendent Obeng has done, but about Board process. Mentions challenge around multiple links to get to executive session language. He doesn't feel like the process needs to be rushed. He asks for a public process.

B. Board Reflection (*was accidentally not added in the agenda- See above*)

In reflection of the last comment, Commissioner Curry mentioned a variety of ways in which the public is made aware of public meetings, such as RETN filming, the Board warning process, and the website.

Commissioner Wick thanked the public for commenting.

Commissioner Seguino thanked the member of the public who had mentioned conversation with Montpelier and outdated data metrics. The Board is trying to make the case to legislators and trying to paint a more accurate picture for increasing student/teacher ratios and is grateful to the BEA for being a part of those conversations.

4. Focus on Learning

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A. Student Support Services (Special Education) Presentation (1)

Student Support Services Director Laura Nuent gave presentation. See [Board Docs](#) to view the presentation.

Superintendent Obeng stated that he plans to talk about pre-k specifically as it relates to special education at a future Board meeting.

Commissioner Curry asked if Laura Nugent was familiar with a variety of data platforms and how it can fit into conversations that will be happening with the legislature.

Laura Nugent mentioned that data prior to her arrival in her position was incorrect. 2015 data was in collected error. This makes comparisons very challenging. Data will continue to improve.

Commissioner Barlow asked why the pre-k numbers are so high. Laura Nugent says that there are many partner programs that have reported this information.

Chair Porter mentioned that prior to pre-k data kindergarten seemed very high. Perhaps this has just shifted as pre-k has come into the picture. Laura Nugent agreed.

Commissioner Olwell asked what the work was in the District to include EL students in getting them the services that they need.

Laura Nugent was mostly concerned at the highschool level as students are moving on to adulthood without the supports they need. She mentioned that with EL populations we also want to be careful not to over-identify or mis-identify them.

Commissioner McLaren asked if there is anything that the Board can do to support this work.

Laura Nugent asked for differentiation and inclusion in instruction and better training for existing staff. She described that as teachers are over extended, there may be identification of needs that might not be appropriate. Professional development is a clear need to build greater tools and support.

Commissioner Harrington asked if there was there a way of measuring progress on inclusion.

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Laura Nugent stated that the District needed to keep building ground and progressing.

5. Board Report

A. VSBA Liaison Report

Commissioner Olwell is going to an upcoming VSBA summit.

B. Burlington City Council Liaison Report

Commissioner McLaren stated he is hoping to open up a dialogue with anyone who is willing regarding the budget and ways the City can help support the budget process, specifically regarding pilot funding.

C. State Legislature Liaison Report

Commissioner Barlow stated that BSD will be having a meeting with a group of legislators on 12/13. BSD will be presenting the complex challenges our district faces and asking for legislative support and advocacy in the coming session. BSD representatives at the meeting include administration, board, BEA, and PTO leaders.

D. PTO Report

Commissioner Curry stated that she went to an event recently and talked to parents and took notes that she will send to the Board. Clarified challenges around accusations toward her of disrespect regarding the Board and BEA.

E. Policy Governance Report

Commissioner Harrington shared that Board Work plan went off schedule when the September Board meeting was cancelled and at the last meeting the Board was not able to do Board monitoring due to time restraints. She recommended doing Board monitoring in January to get up to speed.

F. Negotiations Update

Commissioner Seguino gave the following negotiations updates:

Teachers

This contract has been ratified by both parties, but is unsigned. The parties met Thursday, November 30 to discuss some outstanding issues related to specific contract language. The following Tuesday, based on that discussion, BSD submitted a revised draft of the contract to the BEA and is awaiting a response.

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Office Personnel

This contract has been executed by both parties.

Food Services, Property Services, Bus Services, Information Technology Services

These contracts have been ratified by their respective bargaining units and are awaiting Board ratification, which is scheduled for the Board meeting tonight.

Paraeducators

Bargaining over this agreement has reached an impasse. A mediation was held on Thursday, December 7, but was unsuccessful. The union requested 4% raises for each of two years (or over 8% in total), plus a health insurance arrangement that was not in keeping with other District settlements. The Board offered 2% per year, plus a modest increase in health insurance costs. Details are on the District website. On Friday, December 8, the District sent a letter to the union seeking to schedule binding arbitration before the end of December, so that paraeducators could begin the new year with a settled agreement. We are awaiting a response.

6. Student Commissioners report

Student Representative Bella Weston shared the following highlights:

- Next thursday the high schools Acapella group will be performing at Main street landing at 7 PM
- Hockey highlights
- Seniors are working hard on college applications
- YES program registration
- Today there was an elective course survey (this is the second year this has been implemented and it has been helpful)

Student Representative Isaac Jeneman and another other student joined to give a presentation on Promoting Student Health and Wellness: Condom availability at BHS. See [Board Docs](#) to view the presentation.

Commissioner Harrington- How do students get connected with “peer educators?”

Students respond- There are pamphlets, conversations, and tabling at the high school to discuss sexual activity and consent.

7. Superintendent’s Report

A. Audit Update (2.3)

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Senior Director of Finance Nathan Lavery walked through document posted on Board Docs. See [Board Docs](#) to view the presentation.

Commissioner Barlow- Can the Board use one time money to create a contingency reserve that the Board was unable to create because of pressures in previous years? Nathan Lavery responded yes.

Commissioner Wick- When will Board get copy of the audit?

Nathan Lavery said soon. Auditors have done on site testing. There is one piece of analysis that is missing. Once that is complete it will become available.

Commissioner Wick asks if there has been progress on items mentioned in the management letter?

Nathan Lavery stated that benefits and student accounts have progressed, but also some staff turn over has slowed this momentum. They are doing well in many areas and still struggling in some.

Chair Porter asked for a progress list from the Finance Department (Closed/never be closed/close out when time).

Nathan asked Chair Porter to email the items and he can give an update on the status of those.

Chair Porter reminded the Board that the District had a significant deficit in 2014. Our confidence

Commissioner Kirk- Will we have the management letter next week? It would be nice to compare that one to last years from this time to see progress. Nate will be checking with them to see if it will be ready.

B. Budget Development Update (2.4)

Finance Director Nathan Lavery gave a presentation. See [Board Docs](#) to view the presentation.

Commissioner Curry- Education Block Grant- How is money governed?

Nathan Lavery- Set reimbursement on basis of average wage. Not sure who is making the law there.

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Commissioner Curry added that this could be something for the legislative conversation. Once again Burlington is unique and faces unique challenges.

Superintendent Obeng mentioned that a budget Q & A can be developed as well.

Commissioner McLaren- Can Title III funding be used on other areas?

Nathan Lavery says yes, but there are certain restrictions.

Commissioner Seguino, in referring to slide 9, asked about central office reductions. Was that too much? How is that going?

Superintendent Obeng said that the District is still learning. The workload is being determined. There may be asks down the road as more demands arise but the district needed to show that they were willing to make sacrifices as well.

Commissioner Curry asked for the Equity Index for the expected December 20th meeting Special Board Meeting.

Chair Porter asks that the Board get all questions to Nate as soon as possible.

C. Good News

Superintendent Obeng shared good news articles about the ranking of Burlington compared to surrounding districts in a tool linked in a NY times. He will send information from the article to the Board.

8. Consent Agenda

- A. Licensed Employment Contracts
- B. Routine Financial Reports
- C. November 14, 2017 Draft School Board Minutes
- D. November 21, 2017 Draft School Board Minutes
- E. November 28, 2017 Draft Special Meeting Minutes
- F. December 5th, 2017 Draft Special Meeting Minutes

*Motion to approve to approve consent agenda (Commissioner Harrington/Commissioner Curry)
Passes unanimously*

9. Board Monitoring of Superintendent-Prepared Reports

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A. 2.3 Financial Conditions and Activities

See [Board Docs](#) to view the monitoring report.

Commissioner Harrington reminded the Board that the focus should be “is the work the right kind of work that we think should be happening?” In addition she stated the following considerations:

- 1.) Is the interpretation reasonable?
- 2.) Does the evidence support that interpretation?
- 3.) Perhaps we think this is a reasonable interpretation, but perhaps it was reasonable, but not what we want.

If the latter, the Board would want to consider a change in policy. Perhaps the Board could discuss the reasonableness of the interpretation.

Chair Porter recommended that the Board could go through a year cycle. Is the limitation itself reasonable? This particular report really shows the financial history of the school district.

Commissioner Curry mentioned how clear and simple this report is. This is a good frame of reference for the more standard policy monitoring reports in the future. There is good documentation and it is easy to follow. There may need to be more time spent on the ones that aren't so cut and dry.

Commissioner Harrington acknowledged the simplicity of the policy language as well. Additionally she recalled concerns about getting rid of the finance committee and how this policy helps the Board stay informed.

*Motion to accept Superintendent monitoring report 2.3 as in compliance
(Commissioner Curry/Commissioner Kleman)*

Commissioner Wick stated he wants to be more informed on finance and wonders about need for finance committee.

Commissioner Barlow mentioned that he sat on the finance committee and before not everyone had the information that the finance committee had and that was challenging. Now the full Board is getting this information.

Commissioner Curry mentioned the Board's role is to ask the right questions. The detailed budget document will become available again this year to help clarify.

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The Superintendent oversees the money and the Board evaluates them on how they do that.

Commissioner McLaren- Appreciated Commissioner Curry's description and also acknowledged how Commissioner Wick felt and also stated he feels the same. This may be the result of being new as well. In the event of non-compliance, the concern for him was that the Board might not know about the non-compliance until a year from now.

Commissioner Kirk felt as well that there may be a disconnect in the transition to policy governance. He stated doesn't feel that the District isn't headed in the right direction, but he still feels that there is a disconnect in the way that information is received.

Chair Porter reminded the Board that financial reports are in the agenda every month. The Board can remove it from the consent agenda for discussion.

Commissioner Harrington stated that she was not on the finance committee and felt that she is receiving more information now than she was before. Wondered if there could be a budget orientation for new Board members. Perhaps there could be orientation for how to read the monitoring reports.

Commissioner Olwell mentioned residents that she talked to and a concern of lack of committees.

Passes Unanimously

10. Board Monitoring on its own policies

A. Discussion of 4.2 Job Description

Commissioner Harrington helped facilitate this process.

Chair Porter felt torn because it was challenging with managing work and different pressures.

Commissioner Curry appreciated that this policy exists and it influenced her to be more proactive. This led her to step up in the role of PTO liaison.

Commissioner Kleman took the process and reflected on her own personal work and thought more holistically- What do we think the community thinks about these different questions?

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Commissioner McLaren- Is the Board able to communicate with our community on these topics?

Motion that the Board is mostly in compliance with policy 4.2 (Commissioner Curry/Chair Porter)
Unanimous approval

Chair Porter would like this to be revisited in Spring.

Commissioner Curry suggested at the Spring Board retreat there could be a Board compliance plan developed.

11. Meeting Evaluation and Follow Up

A. Review and Evaluate Meeting

Board Members reported the following:

- Tough time with work needs
- Good generally
- Should maybe consider two meetings a month and plan around executive sessions (not have lawyers arrive much earlier than needed)
- Appreciation for reports and honesty in reports
- Challenges in correcting misinformation and feeling critical
- Also feel like two meetings a month may be more appropriate
- Like the new focus on learning agenda
- Two meetings would help get information out a little easier
- For student representatives have a better sense of which meetings would be more appropriate.

B. Future Agenda Item Suggestions

Chair Porter listed future agenda items. Most were captured below:

- Staff/student ratios
- 4.1, 3.1, and 4.6 Board Monitoring of its own policies
- 2018 schedule
- Impact of splitting double blocks at HS
- Impact of potential teacher loss
- Criteria for high school
- January specifically- twice monthly board meetings and how these meetings would be split. Chair Porter looks to Commissioner Barlow for help with this.

12. Executive Session

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- A. *Motion to consider Executive Session to discuss Contract Negotiations where premature disclosure to the public could put the District at a disadvantage and possible contract ratification vote and to consider personnel matter (Commissioner Kirk/Commissioner McLaren)*
Passes Unanimously

Motion to Leave Executive Session (Commissioner Kirk/Commissioner Harrington)
Passed unanimously

13. Possible Board Action Based on Executive Session Discussion

Moved that the Board of School Commissioners hereby approves a 2% salary increase for the superintendent for FY18. Be it further moved that the Board of School Commissioners hereby approves and authorizes the Chair and Clerk to execute on its behalf the Renewed/Extended Contract of Employment between the Burlington School District and Yaw Obeng as Superintendent of Schools for the base period of July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021 as per the Terms and Conditions of the contract document presented to this meeting, and be it further moved that the Superintendent's salary for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2018 be set at \$161,091. (Commissioner Judson/Commissioner McLaren)

Yes - Commissioners McLaren, Porter, Seguino, Barlow, Kleman, Harrington, Judson, Curry

No - Kirk, Olwell, Wick

Motion to Ratify AFSCME contracts to include IT, Bus, Property, & Food Service bargaining units (Commissioner McLaren/Commissioner Kleman)
Passes unanimously

14. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn (Commissioner Kirk/Commissioner McLaren) at 10:09 PM

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