



APPROVED 2/13/2018

Burlington Board of School Commissioners Special Meeting Minutes

**Hunt Middle School Library
December 20, 2017, 6 PM**

Attending Board Members: Chair Mark Porter; Jeff Wick; Liz Curry; Mark Barlow; Ryan Maclaren; Kathy Olwell; Susanmarie Harrington; Anne Judson; Stephanie Seguino (arrived late)

1.) *Meeting Called to Order* by Chair Porter at 6:00 PM.

a. requested a motion to approve the agenda.

2. *Motion to Approve Agenda*

(*Commissioner Wick/Commissioner McLaren*)

approved unanimously

3. *Audit Update*

a. Audit update from District Auditor:

Director Lavery directed people to a set of draft audit statements that can be found on [Board Docs](#). Draft statements of audit show the progress BSD has made in the past four years, prior to working with RHR Smith, the District had no independent audit. This year, there was significant staff contribution to the complete the audit on-time from Human Resources, the Business Office, and school-based staff.

Auditor Smith provided an updated on the status of BSD's FY17 audit. He noted that the District has come a long way since his firm began auditing the school district. BSD used to produce annual deficits, but is now producing annual surpluses. The carry over surplus from FY17 is about \$1.1 million and this can be used in the FY19 budget. This District has shown a lot of improvement in understanding and managing its budget, and has also taken steps to improve benefits administration. Student activity accounts remain an area of concern.

Commissioner Curry questioned whether the District has the capacity needed to manage compliance responsibilities. She asked the auditor if we have enough staffing in our business office to address compliance issues based on the size of our District.

Ron Smith responded that we (BSD) are reaching our limit. He suggests the District consider hiring a person to perform internal compliance reviews.

In response to a question from Commissioner Wick, Director Lavery described how money is being treated as student activity revenue without financial controls, which has

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been the case for as long as anyone knows, but should more reasonably be considered district revenue and should have better controls.

Commissioner Wick was curious if there was an existing policy in place to outline how to approach these accounts. Director Lavery explained it is not as simple as putting forth a procedure and expecting people to know how to use it. The District needs to have the capacity to take on the training involved as well.

Superintendent Obeng outlined the training needed across central office, to key people in other District offices, and throughout school staff to actually implement the policies people are looking for. The success of this would have to relate to a timeline that ensures the capacity and resources to implement best practices.

Chairman Porter asked when Ron Smith can return again, in person, to report a final presentation of the audit. Commissioner Lavery suggested that the full final audit would be available in January, but that may not be the best time to discuss the audit again due to the need to focus on finalizing the budget.

4. *Public Comment/Questions*

Dan Cunningham Burlington resident submitted a Public Records Request to see the renewed Superintendent's contract at 8:30 PM on Friday, 12/15/2017. Under VT Open Meetings Law the contract was due to him by 5:00 PM tonight, 12/20/2017. As of 6:40 PM meeting time he still had not received the contract. He urged the Board and the Superintendent to disclose the information as it is public knowledge, and stated his belief that it is the community's right by law to have access to this contract.

Claire Wool Parent and volunteer inquiring about teachers and paraeducators contract. She said she and community members hoped the contract would be signed by now. She wonders if not enough attention is being paid to these contracts and if there is someone from the Board appointed to keeping the process of these contracts moving.

Nicole Tohwig Burlington parent concerned about teacher contracts. She heard a rumor that there is a possibility there is no contract being signed at all. She wonders what that will mean for next steps.

Commissioner Porter closes public comment.

Board Reflections:

Commissioner Wick thanks public for bringing up comments.

Commissioner Curry requests update on teacher contracts from Superintendent

Board reflections closed at 6:39

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5. *Budget Presentation:*

The full Budget presentation can be found on [Board Docs](#).

Prior to beginning the budget presentation, Director Lavery provided a contract update.

Lavery explains that the contracts are being held up to language around leave days and staff meetings. The suggestion that teacher contract discussions have broken down is false. This information is not coming from the BEA or the District leads.

Contract negotiations with paraeducators have not concluded, but the District has a plan in place to ensure this staff remains covered by health insurance in the new year.

Commissioner Judson asks what the best approach would be to addressing the person on the street that asks her, as a Board commissioner, the status of the contracts. Is she just to tell those people the District is working in good faith to move things along?

Commissioner Lavery reiterated that the BEA's concern is around language and appears minor. The BEA wants to ensure the entirety of the contract is agreeable to their members, and the District concurs. Commissioner Lavery also wants it to be known that they will receive a retroactive pay increase as if they've been working under the new contract since the start of the year.

Superintendent Obeng gave a brief outline prior to the budget outline:

"The budget process is an opportunity to emphasize the priorities of the District and Board in the terms of supporting students. We continue to face different challenges at the State and Federal level, but the budget is created with a positive outlook. And while most people are looking for an end product, we are still waiting on variable numbers that are not in as of yet."

Director Lavery presented a set of slides about the budget process. They included information on the community consultation process and themes from those discussions, as well as a list of ideas for additional budget investments.

Director Lavery also discussed the fact that it was unclear whether there would be changes in state law that would direct the District to reduce staff, but said that this budget proposal did not contemplate reducing staff in anticipation of State action.

A slide describing how the district allocates core teachers to middle schools was discussed. It included factors related to student needs in the allocation formula, using the District's new equity index. It has been a challenge to talk about equity v equality w/administrators. Using metrics to guide proposals from building administrators - process is improving. Requests were more aligned this year with metrics that were presented.

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After living with \$700k in cuts over last 2 years in central office, now understanding where we need to add back in.

Superintendent Obeng presented a series of slides that described proposed new investments corresponding to each area of the strategic plan. These investments amounted to over \$1.7 million, which would be on top of the underlying increases associated with a “level funded” budget that incorporates the next fiscal year wages, benefits, and other required increases.

Director Lavery explained that tax rates could not yet be calculated as a key variable, the CLA is not yet available. He noted that the known variables are putting upward pressure on tax rates.

Chairman Porter called the presentation to close after significant discussion and in depth questions were asked. He asked the Board to review their questions and submit them to the Superintendent to be included on the Board FAQs.

Budget Presentation item closed at 8:19PM.

6. Review and Agreement on FY18 Superintendent Goals

Commissioner Ryan commented - need comprehensive climate survey in order to measure school climate - should cover all stakeholders

Commissioner Seguino informed the Board that MOU with UVM includes a climate survey - seems like we are in position to have the baseline

Board members briefly discussed the purpose of the performance goals as being areas where the Board sees a particular need to elevate issues for which performance pay opportunities are available to the Superintendent.

Goal: to develop a robust Employment Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Hiring Plan to increase the representation of teachers of color in the Burlington School District. This plan should include a mechanism for measuring progress.”

Motion to demonstrate meaningful progress towards implementing the Employment Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Hiring Plan Outlined in 2018.

(2:41:10) Approved 9-1, Commissioner Olwell opposed

7. Review and Agreement on FY19 Superintendent Goals

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Goal: to develop and begin implementing a plan detailing actions to improve and promote a positive work culture and climate in each school building and in central office, in support of central and school based administrators and their staff. This plan should include a mechanism for measuring progress.

Motion to demonstrate meaningful progress on improving District climate, based on the plan you developed in FY19.

Commissioner Wick stated his opposition on grounds that the incoming board should have the right to generate its own super's goals, not the outgoing board.

(2:41:10) Approved 8-2, Commissioner's Wick and Olwell opposed.

8. Motion to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matter- Superintendent Evaluation (Commissioner Judson/Commissioner Seguino) passes unanimously

Motion to Exit Executive Session (Commissioner_Barlow/ Commissioner_Olwell_)

Approved unanimously

9. Adjournment

A. Motion to Adjourn (Commissioner McLarene_/ Commissioner Judson)

Approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by: Karsen Woods

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