



APPROVED 2/13/2018

## Burlington Board of School Commissioners Special Meeting Minutes

Hunt Middle School Library  
January 16, 2018

Attending Board Members: Kathy Olwell, Mark Porter, Mark Barlow, Anne Judson, Stephanie Seguino, Liz Curry, Kat Klemen, Susanmarie Harrington, Jeff Wick, Ryan McLaren

- 1.) Meeting Called to Order by 6:07
- 2.) Motion to Approve Agenda  
*(Commissioner Barlow/Commissioner Olwenn)*

### 3.) Public Comment/Questions:

Mike Fisher suggested we start the budgeting process with the District needs in order to arrive at the tax number.

Tyler Doggett said how can anyone except an expert know how to get a kid to graduate?

Public Comment closed at 6:18

#### A. Board Reflections

Commissioner Seguino informed the public that there is a line item District budget online and teacher salaries can be found there.

Commissioner Curry said, "I am heartened and worried by contradictory messages the Board is receiving from constituents. It might be helpful if we are able to create a portal where we can read community comments."

*The District is establishing a platform where people can express their views on the proposed tax implication.*

Cultivating caring, creative, and courageous people. Join the journey!



Commissioner Klemen expressed that she, too, is sensitive to the financial issues at hand. She knows people are lacking resources to achieve excellence. She believes there are not enough bodies in classroom to provide attention for children. She also noted recognition to Principal Dorfman for her support to her students when school buses were behind due to road conditions.

Commissioner Judson is also sensitive to the Burlington constituents. Those who are able to meet financial implications will still have a hard time absorbing the tax increase.

Commissioner McLaren expressed a hope to continue to hear community feedback. He is also pleased to know the District now has a fully executed contract with teachers.

Board Reflections close at 6:23 PM

4.) Budget Update: Sr. Director Lavery and Superintendent Obeng recommended the surplus funds be applied to the General Fund Budget. Surplus is one time money through a combination of savings and revenues that is quantified as a result of the audit. They also shared the opportunity for community input.

A. Questions from the Board members:

- Commissioner Olwell needed clarification that interventionists does not mean psychologist.
- Commissioner McLaren passed on questions initially.
- Commissioner Seguino thanked the District for finding savings in a comfortable way. She likes the idea of an online portal for community input.
- Commissioner Curry wanted to point out that Central Office has been taking cuts well before Superintendent Obeng arrived. Including \$100k + for Chief Operating Officer and other costs. She wanted the Board to use this time to have a robust and rich conversation. BHS reductions are understandable, although she was alarmed by the elementary reductions.
- Commissioner Judson discussed that last year the auditor implied that the Central Office needed more support. She wondered if the Superintendent feels the District is able to support the services in Central Office.
- Superintendent Obeng told her Central Office is at its threshold. The only reason Central Office remains successful is the high-level staff that are capable and instill a lot of confidence.

Cultivating caring, creative, and courageous people. Join the journey!



- Commissioner Judson is concerned about possible cuts to elementary. It is a very high needs population and 22 kids is a lot. Why is there a difference between Smith and Flynn? (*Different ages served*)

The Superintendent explained that interventionists function differently at different schools to meet that school's needs. Repurposing interventionists would satisfy this challenge and create consistent clarity around the purpose of the interventionist model. Targeted strategies would address the Achievement Gap. Removing them does not change classroom ratios. There is an urgency to establish consistency across schools and classrooms.

Commissioner Barlow also has concerns with elementary reductions. He is angry about the city's inability to help us during this financial trying time. The [Burlington] city should be helping us pay for the non educational spending funds we need.

Director Lavery explained to a certain extent the District should be able to get some increased spending from the city, however modest, the District can help backfill, like the afterschool program. Achievement Gap PD and data staff are potential grant resources.

Commissioner Harrington seconds commissioner Barlow. She doesn't believe she can persuade constituents that there is value in making reductions in elementary classrooms. She wonders how she can explain the vision for the future of Burlington elementary schools. If she can understand that rationale, she might feel more comfortable discussing that.

Commissioner Kleman is also concerned about elementary cuts. She wonders where/how people would be reassigned to address classroom needs. She is also disgusted by the city's refusal to give the District access to the Pilot funds.

Superintendent Obeng urged the Board to look at the data to see where we are not achieving. This is the ninth year of magnet schools and still the data remains the same. The District has to be willing to work strategically to do right by the students of Burlington. If everyone wants to see change and improvement, the Board and the community need to trust the Directors to make the difficult moves to move forward. "When are we going to do that?" he asked. "I want to do it now!" He said he will defer to whatever the Board wants him to do, but this is the analysis he was responsible for.

**Cultivating caring, creative, and courageous people. Join the journey!**



Chair Porter would like to see how the progression of change looks in the future considering not every grade is alike, and cohorts move through schools that require different needs.

Commissioner Seguino recognized the Superintendent's well-developed analytical mechanism that is sound and in depth. The Board needs to hear narratives that explain that it is not as worrisome as the Board believes. She applauds his passion and wants to be a part of moving this ship. Changing a system is very hard, inertia is deep, and it isn't a popularity contest- that being said she supports the Superintendent in doing this, but we are turning the Titanic and it takes time to do that. In the meantime, every year kids are dropping out of school, their futures are forever impacted by the District's and City's failures.

Superintendent Obeng told the Board this is not just a job, he takes very seriously and has honest intentions to improve this District. He would not present anything that he is not comfortable with.

Commissioner Curry explain many on the Board are not privy to the data produced by the D&E Committee. There is a disconnect with some Board members' understanding of the strategies being discussed at a deeper level in D&E Committee. She feels she's missing how exactly the resources would be allocated. She hears how difficult it is for teachers to manage the classrooms that are affected by trauma behaviors, so she asked for more comprehensive explanation of what's going to change in the classrooms. She requested more details on the reallocation of elementary resources.

Commissioner Judson admitted she is looking at this through a very narrow lens. She would also like to know how it will look with the recommended changes.

Superintendent Obeng explained in order to further the strategic pillars the Board has discussed, the Budget team had to identify resource to reallocate. The resources the District recaptures can be reallocate back into the social and emotional needs of each school- which is an identified need at all levels. The District needs to change the structure to give staff de-escalation strategies to address classroom needs. "We need to move forward toward initiatives to keep kids engaged. How we are doing it currently reinforces the behavior."

**Cultivating caring, creative, and courageous people. Join the journey!**



Commissioner Curry still does not feel clear on how the \$700k will be reallocated and deployed in the middle schools or across the District to mitigate the needs of elementary classrooms.

Superintendent Obeng wanted to clarify that he agrees that interventionists have an impact on students, however, it is not equitable that some students have different experiences with their interventionists than others due to lack of uniformity in training and expectations. The six remaining can have a more inclusive role in looking at behavior supports as well as academic supports. By using the increase in Special Education supports, we will be able to develop behavior coaches. It's going to build the capacity of our staff to address these areas.

Commissioner Klemen told the Superintendent she trusted him, and thanked him for his work thus far.

Commissioner Harrington hopes at the next Board meeting the Board can be given a narrative of what things will look like after these proposed changes.

Commissioner Olwell wanted to know what studies were being referenced to back these proposed changes up. She explained that socioeconomic segregation of schools is more damaging to kids than schools that are segregated by race. She believes that as long as our city schools are segregated on socioeconomic lines, we will have a hard time changing those systems.

Chair Porter would also like the narrative regarding the future.

Commissioner Seguino reiterated that the idea with the magnet schools was to socioeconomically integrate. She asked to be shown the ways in which the Budget items can be linked to the changes the Superintendent is hoping to see in the schools. For example, how does the space maker proposal meet our goals better than the six interventionists? She said, "7% is something I could live with if we are able to tell a clear story about how these specific expenditures will lead us to our goals."

Commissioner McLaren said he would like to empower the Superintendent and Program Directors to ask for the things they need to build the vision of attaining student success. He would like to talk about cuts in staffing as a way to get us towards our goals, not talk about teacher reductions in a number way.

**Cultivating caring, creative, and courageous people. Join the journey!**



Director Lavery explained the library makerspace is a one time investment. It is also a successful opportunity for students at every tactile. makerspace would be a successful opportunity for students at every tactile.

Commissioner Curry wonder what problem does adding a .5 FTE to Hunt resolve? Obeng explained it would allow the middle schoolers to have another elective option.

Commissioner Wick is interested in a budget version that does not include reductions to direct instruction or sports.

Chair Porter told the Board that the next meeting would include a motion and vote to using the surplus as revenue. He also asked that there be a more in-depth explanation regarding reductions to elementary faculty.

The Superintendent asked for clarification on the Board's expectations because a majority of the discussion has been programmatic, rather than feedback regarding the proposals made in the presentation itself. He needs to know if the Board is comfortable with the numbers they are presenting. .

Chair Porter believes he could sell his constituents on a 7% increase based on what he knows, but will need a narrative to provide salesmanship to the elementary school reductions.

Commissioner McLaren told the Superintendent 7% is his floor.

Commissioner Olwell reiterated that if changes need to be made, funds need to be given to nourish those changes. 6.92% does little to support the proposed changes presented by the Superintendent . She would go out for 9%.

Commissioner Seguino agrees with 7% and then expressed the Board's responsibility in selling that budget..

Commissioner Curry said 7% is her minimum. She also mentioned that some of the City reserves are composed of District pilot funds and could be returned to tax-payers with a small tax cut on the City's side.

Commissioner Judson is willing to go to 8%.

Cultivating caring, creative, and courageous people. Join the journey!



Commissioner Barlow is comfortable around 7%, but needs a story to explain that education is not being damaged.

Commissioner Harrington said we need to be rebuilding at a time like now.  
Commissioner Kleman said 7% is her floor. She would go out for under 10%. 8.5% would be her number.

Commissioner Wick will support a budget that didn't cut elementary faculty and interventionists.

5.) Adjournment

A. *Motion to Adjourn*

*(Commissioner Klemen/Commissioner Barlow)*

Cultivating caring, creative, and courageous people. Join the journey!