

The Regular Meeting of the Brockton School Committee was held this evening in the George M. Romm Little Theatre at Brockton High School at seven o'clock.

Present: Mr. Minichiello, Vice-Chair; Ms. Clark, Mr. Henningson, Mrs. Joyce, Mr. Robinson, Mrs. Sullivan, Mrs. Smith, Secretary

Absent: Mayor Carpenter, Mr. Jordan

Note: These minutes contain a summary of the meeting and list items that were under discussion.

Mr. Minichiello called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., followed by a salute to the flag.

Hearing of Visitors

Mr. John Talbot, President of the Custodians' Union, addressed the School Committee with his concerns about recalls and the short-staffed custodial department. Mrs. MaryJane Pezzano spoke to the School Committee about administrative assistants that have not been called back and the need to fill the vacant positions.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Minichiello explained the purpose of the Consent Agenda, and asked if School Committee members wished to remove any items. Mrs. Joyce asked to remove Item 5, minutes of the August 5, 2014 Safety/Security/Transportation subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Clark moved the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- Approval of the minutes of the July 8, 2014 Regular School Committee Meeting
- Acceptance of the report of the July 8, 2014 Accounts Review Subcommittee Meeting
- Acceptance of the report of the July 29, 2014 Finance Subcommittee Meeting
- Acceptance of the report of the July 29, 2014 Safety/Security/Transportation Subcommittee
- Acceptance of Minutes of May 14, 2014 Annual CSAB Retreat
- Acceptance of Notification of Executive Session Minutes Review
- Authorization to Submit 21st Century CCL Additional Learning Time Grant FY15 for \$386,000
- Authorization to Submit US Dept. of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Svc. Project AWARE FY15 Grant - \$50,000/year (2 years)
- Acceptance of Notification of Personnel Appointments – Certified and Non-Certified
- Acceptance of Notification of Personnel Actions: Leaves of Absence, Resignations, Retirements

Voted: to adopt the recommendation, unanimous.

Enclosure 5, August 5, 2014 Safety/Security/Transportation Meeting Report - Mrs. Joyce read the report aloud for the public in light of the fact that it included the elimination of crossing guard positions. Mr. Minichiello added that a lot of hard work was done by the committee and others in the district in order to save buses, resulting in 900 students who will now *not* have to walk to and from school. The School Committee was pleased that they

were also able to avoid extending walk zones to bus stops. The Superintendent said that the district will now begin working to ensure parents are informed about the changes.

Mrs. Sullivan moved to accept the August 5, 2014 report of the Safety/Security/Transportation meeting.

Voted: To approve the motion, unanimous.

Superintendent's Report

FY 2015 Budget Update

The Superintendent responded to Mr. Talbot's and Mrs. Pezzano's earlier comments. She said that if anything good has come out of the budget crisis, it is that everyone is working together. She advised that she is available to meet to discuss things such as rumors should they come up; she agreed with their concerns about staffing.

Superintendent Smith then reported that on a positive note, the School Committee has given her allowance to use up to \$300,000 in additional, identified funds to recall necessary staff. She remarked that we are staffed at minimum levels now, and she is watching enrollment numbers very closely so that class sizes do not go beyond 30 at the elementary level. She said that students are the number one priority. She thanked the union presidents for their continued cooperation.

Mr. Minichiello also addressed Mr. Talbot and Mrs. Pezzano, he told them that their words are certainly heard. He said we have not only lost people, but programs for the children that have been around a long time, and said that "none of us are happy; we value your contributions and don't minimize your roles."

The Superintendent stated that she had a conversation with J. Condon, CFO for Brockton with respect to Schedule 19 and other budget issues. She announced that she has an appointment to appear before City Council on Monday, August 18, at 7 p.m., she will bring the message of what is needed to support our students in their learning.

District Review

The Superintendent opened by stating just a few months into her first year, in October of 2013, she received a call from the DESE that Brockton was up for a District Review. She said tonight the findings of the Review will be presented, which will directly lead into her presentation of the Brockton Public Schools Strategic Plan. The Superintendent introduced Laura Richane, from the DESE, and invited her and Dr. Cancell to present the report.

Dr. Cancell prepared a power point presentation. He explained the purpose of the District Review--to support district decision making by providing an objective analysis of how district systems impact teaching and learning, and suggestions for the district's ongoing improvement efforts.

Dr. Cancell explained that the Review was conducted during on-site visits from November 18 to November 21, 2013. Review Teams determined by the DESE held interviews with school committee members, district administrators, school staff, parents, students, representatives from the teachers' association, they conducted focus groups with teachers and observed instruction in 125 classrooms. Teams also reviewed data on student and school performance, staffing, finances, looked at policies and documents from all

departments and randomly reviewed teacher evaluations. The final report was issued in April, 2014. Dr. Cancell noted that findings in the report are based on the data from November 18 – 21, 2013; he said that some of the issues in the report have already been addressed. Dr. Cancell then went on to present the findings with respect to strengths, challenges and recommendations.

After the presentation, Mr. Minichiello told Ms. Richane that Brockton's ELL and SPED programs have been a topic of discussion during the last few budgets and the district has consistently added positions in those areas every year. He said the Committee willingly approaches these challenges, but budget constraints do not provide the necessary funding. He said Brockton is a gateway city and is different than many other cities in that we have much larger ELL and SPED populations, and the reality of what the district would like to do is different from our financial reality.

Mrs. Joyce said it was good to have the feedback from the DESE and, given our unique circumstances, asked Ms. Richane whether the DESE will utilize this information to look at how funding is handled. Ms. Richane responded and assured Mrs. Joyce that the information is looked at by many departments; she said she would also convey the district's concerns. She commended the Superintendent and the School Committee for valiantly facing a very serious challenge. Mr. Minichiello thanked Ms. Richane for attending.

Strategic Plan

The Superintendent began by stating that she is very excited to present the *Strategic Plan*, along with Deputy Elizabeth Barry and Michael Thomas. Superintendent Smith called the Brockton schools a very strong, *unified* district that is moving forward. She provided the Committee with a copy of her Strategic Plan and power point presentation. She reviewed the key points:

Vision Statement - Instructional excellence for every student, every day.

Mission Statement – The Brockton Public Schools ensures student success by fulfilling the educational, social, and emotional needs of all students in the pursuit of instructional excellence.

Theory of Action - **If** the Brockton Public Schools implements a system of instructional excellence that 1) delivers Common Core-aligned curriculum in a safe and supportive environment, 2) values a strong system of growth by consistently supporting the Brockton Educator growth and Evaluation Network (BEGEN), 3) designs and adopts a system of quality professional development that supports all stakeholders in meeting their professional and district-determined goals, and 4) provides all students and teachers with access to quality instructional technology that improves digital literacy; **Then** we will ensure our students are socially, emotionally and academically prepared to succeed in a global society.

Areas of Focus for Strategic Objectives: 1) Instructional Excellence, 2) Supportive Environment, and 3) Community Engagement. Each of these areas of focus was supported by *Strategic Objectives*, *Strategic Initiatives*, and detailed *Proposed Action Steps*.

The Superintendent said that the plan will be open to refining and revision, and she will be sure that it is spread widely, so that staff, parents, students will understand how the district operates. She then asked Mrs. Barry to address the topic of Instructional Excellence.

Mrs. Barry followed with a detailed presentation, reviewing objectives, strategies and proposed actions. Mr. Thomas followed Mrs. Barry's presentation with the plan for safe and secure buildings, facility usage, maintenance and planning, and student safety, both physically and socially.

A question and answer period followed the presentation.

There was a lengthy discussion about measurements of success. Mr. Robinson said he would like to hear more about *how* we will know if we are actually successful; how will we measure success and *what are* measures of success. He mentioned where we are now and where we hope to be, and said he would love for us to begin to think in that frame. He also said that when looking at the strategic plan, two out of three of our focus areas are difficult to measure, i.e. student supports, he felt there is still a lot of critical thinking to be done.

Mrs. Joyce said the plan identifies exactly what we want our district to look like, she will be looking to see how the classroom culture and dynamic changes as a result of this plan. She asked Mrs. Barry what mechanisms the district will institute to do *ongoing* assessment with respect to higher order thinking and problem-solving skills, Mrs. Barry responded that there are proposed action steps, and now the district will need to determine what these action steps look like at one, two months down the road.

Mr. Minichiello said it was an excellent report and put forward that it is critical that teachers communicate to their principals their own assessment of the readiness of the students they inherited. He said the first term is a critical opportunity for teachers to provide this input; it gives the system the opportunity to assess itself. The Superintendent agreed, stating that we must be comfortable with looking at what we need to do better.

Mrs. Barry responded and said the district uses MCAS results and the K-8 STARR assessments tools to measure student achievement; she added that the STARR assessment allows for incremental distinctions, such as where students are struggling and what are their strengths. Mr. Minichiello replied that assessments are good, but conversation between teachers and their building administrators will bear positive fruit. Mrs. Barry agreed that the district can find a balance, using formal assessments and providing opportunities for teachers to say "this is what I know and feel isn't right," or "these are strengths that I see."

Superintendent Smith said she plans to discuss timelines and benchmarks (what is the data and what are we looking to accomplish) at the September School Committee retreat. She reminded the Committee that the strategic plan is a fluid document; it can be revised. She added that emerging themes from the Entry Plan, along with findings from the District Review were addressed in the plan. The Superintendent stated that "the plan says what we think will give us instructional excellence for our students", she plans to use it as leverage when she talks with stakeholders and asks them what they can do to help the district.

Mr. Henningson said Technology should be a focus for the next budget season; he feels the district must figure out a way to get technology into classrooms so we can meet the challenges. The Superintendent pointed out that along with technology, there are many budget implications in the plan.

Mrs. Joyce asked Mr. Thomas where we stand with respect to a Facilities Master Plan; she said this will be critical for the district to move forward. She recalled that the Mayor had given his support for a facilities master plan, and asked Mr. Thomas for an update. Mr.

Thomas explained where the district currently stands in the process. Mrs. Joyce said we need to begin moving on this; Mr. Thomas suggested a September facilities meeting at which they can begin to assess building usage.

Mrs. Sullivan said the vision gives a focal point and will motivate parents, students, and staff to become an even stronger system.

Ms. Clark said that she would like more information, at a later date, about programs and measures with respect to social development for ESL and SPED, how we will we empower students to have visible achievements (i.e. data), as well as empowering them to not be victimized by other students. The Superintendent responded that one of the items in her plan is to bring on a Cultural Proficiency Specialist.

Mr. Minichiello thanked the Superintendent and her team for the presentation.

The Superintendent put forward a School Committee Retreat in late September.

Items to Refer to Subcommittee

Unfinished Business

Superintendent's Evaluation

Mr. Minichiello referred to the evaluation tool all School Committee members received in their Friday packet, and the supporting documentation provided by Superintendent Smith. The Superintendent clarified that as a first-year Superintendent, this year's goals were determined by the DESE, but that the School Committee will be involved in developing goals for the Superintendent going forward. She would like to discuss this at the September retreat. She asked the Committee to complete the evaluation packet as soon as possible. Mr. Minichiello said after the evaluations are incorporated, a public meeting will be held.

New Business

The Superintendent gave a reminder that she will discuss the *State of the Schools* at the City Council meeting on Monday August 18, at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

Mr. Minichiello announced that Summerfest is scheduled for Saturday, August 16, from 10 to 4 pm, and will be held on the grounds of Brockton High School.

Mr. Minichiello said he attended the Act One, Scene One show and praised the talent of the children who participated.

Mr. Minichiello also recognized the good job done by the crew that maintains the Manning and Cosgrove pools; he stated the water has been pristine and that even State inspectors were impressed with the condition of both Cosgrove and Manning pools.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Smith, JD
Secretary
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