

BATTLE CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

Work Session

April 11, 2022

**Board Room at the Administration Building, 3 West Van Buren Street, Battle Creek, MI
5:30 p.m.**

PRESENT – BOARD OF EDUCATION

Catherine LaValley

Kyra Wallace

Patty Poole-Gray

Charlie Fulbright

Jacqueline Slaby

Nathan Grajek

Absent

Art McClenney

Present – Administration

Kim Carter – Superintendent

Mitch Fowler – Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Jeff English – Senior Executive Director, Business Operations

Rhonda Potts - Executive Director

Robin Beyer, Acting HR Director

Dr. Chandra Youngblood – Director, Elementary Education

Dr. Anita Harvey, Director, District Transformation

Dr. Deborah Nuzzi – Director, Special Programming & Literacy Services

Monique Cheeks – Director, Student Services

Nathan Hunt, Communications Manager

Wes Seeley – Director of Grant, Federal Programs and Adult Education

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by President LaValley at 5:31pm. Catherine LaValley, Kyra Wallace, Patty Poole-Gray, Charlie Fulbright, Jacqueline Slaby and Nathan Grajek were present.

There was a Virtual Introduction of the Voces Interpreters for tonight's meeting.

President LaValley read the following statement:

We are aware that there is concern in the Community around recent allegations shared on social media involving a staff member at Northwestern Middle School. When the privacy of students and personnel matters are involved, what we can and cannot share publicly becomes extremely sensitive. We absolutely understand the desire for more information, and we regret that our need to keep details confidential is having an impact on families who would like to know more.

There are various pieces of information circulating, and we ask for the Community's patience as we get to the bottom of the situation so that appropriate action can be taken. If you know of any information that you would like to share and report, please contact the Superintendent's Office right away.

President Catherine LaValley read aloud our Mission Statement.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Secretary Patty Poole-Gray for the Board of Education to convene in Closed Session for the purpose of considering the contents of a confidential attorney-client privileged communication as permitted by Section 8(1)(h) of the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

Vice President Kyra Wallace supported the Motion.

President LaValley noted the Closed Session will be added as a new Item Number XIII before Superintendent Comments.

Motion passed 6 – 0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

President Catherine LaValley discussed and explained the procedure for Public Comments.

Moella Peters
175 Sherman Road
Battle Creek
(269) 431-3385

Moella Peters indicated she is a Battle Creek resident and was made aware, as well as lot of other Community members, of the allegations in BCPS, mainly NWMS. She added there are plenty more to come forward.

Moella said she wanted to say one thing. She is in school at KCC for social work and the key thing is we are all mandated reporters. She feels this is a huge issue and does not understand how it was swept under the rug, to protect our kids, make them feel heard. She doesn't feel the individuals who brushed over it should keep their job, there need to be repercussions because it hurts. She said the students are not her kids, but technically they are her kids because they are in the Community.

Latisha Griffin
195 Kendall Street N
Battle Creek
(269) 753-8774

Latisha Griffin said she is the original Complainant for the claim made by her niece. She wanted everyone to understand why she did the Facebook Live, which was to reach out to parents on her social media to speak with their kids. She said she is struggling right now with feeling like she failed her niece, only because she feels unsafe and is not comfortable. Her niece went through the proper process to report a concern and someone dropped the ball and no one stepped up to say they messed up. Her niece is not sleeping and stays in her room and is overwhelmed. She added that she didn't think the Facebook Live would get as many responses as it did. She thinks this is a wake-up call for parents and for all of us, and something needs to be done, even for the nay-sayers and laughers, including the Principal, who are making a mockery of students' posts. There has to be someone who sees there is a problem, not just for her student but all students. There needs to be a process for teachers to report their fellow teachers as a duty to students. It took 4 months on this incident and it still didn't come from the school finding out, it came from the doctor's office, which is a problem to her.

Ta'Meika Caldwell
170 Upton Avenue
Battle Creek
(269) 245-9696

Ta'Meika Caldwell indicated that patience is a virtue, but don't ask for patience when we are behind. We are behind on information and BCPS is behind on taking the proper action. As an opinion based on dealing with him, Mr. Fooy, is chauvinistic and highly disrespectful to female parents.

Amber Sheppard
545 Wagner
Battle Creek
(269) 870-4476

Amber Sheppard indicated she is not a very good public speaker, but when it comes to her children, they are her world. She said as part of this Community, these children are the future. Parents trust that their kids will be safe and learn when they send them to school every day and to have that trust broken, on numerous occasions, as a parent, she said she takes some of the blame because she continually trusts the schools. Promoted everywhere is "Believe in the Change" because the change is coming, but it needs to happen now and needs to start with the higher-ups regarding things that are being ignored. She said parents tell their kids to speak up, stand up for yourself and your fellow classmates, but when that gets ignored, we expect respect from them but when that trust is broken, what can we expect then.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2022-23 BCPD Police Officer Liaison Contract

Monique Cheeks discussed the 2022-23 BCPD Police Officer Liaison Contract in the amount of \$98,750.00 with the General Fund as the Funding Source.

Monique introduced Officer Deaudre Perry, our liaison from BCPD. He discussed his day-to-day duties at BCCHS and in the BCPS District. Officer Perry indicated he is also a BCPS parent.

There was a request to include the training requirement language in the 2022-23 BCPD Police Officer Liaison Contract before it comes back to the Board for approval at the Regular Meeting on April 25, 2022.

Monique will check with the BCPD about adding the training to the Contract.

The Board will vote on this item at the Regular Meeting on April 25, 2022.

2022-23-24 Landscaping Maintenance (Lawncare)

Jeff English requested to discuss all three (3) Landscaping recommendations at once and then move to the Fremont Gym Floor Replacement. The Board agreed with this request.

Jeff English and Josh Bowman discussed the 2022-23-24 Landscaping Maintenance (Lawncare) in the amount of \$387,129.00 with the General Fund (Facilities Dept) as the Funding Source.

The Board will vote on this item at the Regular Meeting on April 25, 2022.

2022-23-24 Landscaping Maintenance (Landscape)

Jeff English and Josh Bowman discussed the 2022-23-24 Landscaping Maintenance (Landscape) in the amount of \$203,042.00 with the General Fund (Facilities Dept) as the Funding Source.

The Board will vote on this item at the Regular Meeting on April 25, 2022.

2022-23-24 Landscaping Maintenance (Athletic Field Maintenance)

Jeff English and Josh Bowman discussed the 2022-23-24 Landscaping Maintenance (Athletic Field Maintenance) in the amount of \$150,885.00 with the General Fund (Facilities Dept) as the Funding Source.

The Board will vote on this item at the Regular Meeting on April 25, 2022.

Fremont Gym Floor Replacement

Jeff English and Josh Bowman discussed the Fremont Gym Floor Replacement in the amount of \$76,827.00 with the Sinking Fund as the Funding Source.

It was clarified that the “mat covering” installed in the Summer of 2021, mentioned in the Superintendent Recommendation in the Board Packet, was for the 2021-22 school year (not 2022-23) to provide a temporary (1 year) surface to support safe student activity.

The Board will vote on this item at the Regular Meeting on April 25, 2022.

DISCUSSION

Battle Creek Promise Zone Report

President Catherine LaValley discussed the Battle Creek Promise Zone Report.

The Board requested to have Laura Zalle with BC CAN (College Access Network) join the Board at a future meeting to share new details of the Promise Zone and Legacy Scholars.

Superintendent Carter will work on coordinating that.

Treasurer Charlie Fulbright indicated Laura also attends the BCPSEF Meetings and it would be nice if she could provide an update to this group as well.

MASB Board of Education Governance Standards

President Catherine LaValley discussed the MASB Board of Education Governance Standards.

The Board reviewed and discussed Governance Standard number 3, items 3a through 3g.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bobby Holley

PO Box 2296

Battle Creek

Bobby Holley indicated he was here tonight to share the news about his Drive to give Free Bicycles to all needy children, ages 7-10, with the Board. This effort is to provide good recreational fun for needy kids this Summer. He plans to visit some of the schools in the District and share the news that this campaign is going on.

Students are asked to write a one-page essay about why they need a bike. Essays can be submitted to participating schools by April 29th. He will collect the essays and has a Committee to review them. They will also be collecting bottles and cans for this campaign. He will be at Walmart and Family Fare raising funds as well.

Bobby Holley said he is not asking the Board for donations but the Committee would like to attach the name of someone in the District, along with their name, on the bike to make it more personal.

Channel Simmons
(269-317-3332)

Channel Simmons said she is a single Mom of three children, two who are Middle School students, a girl and a boy. Her daughter is in the same grade as Jasmine Griffin, 8th Grade. She said parents teach their kids about safe touch but not so much about how they are to be spoken to. She discussed that sexual harassment is taught in the work place and she read the description of sexual harassment from her phone. She said parents send their kids to school to feel safe. She believes it takes a Village to raise a child and when she sends her children to school, while she is at work that is part of their Village. Her children do not feel safe in class and they need to feel safe in order to have academic achievement. She asked what we are teaching children when we don't take the necessary steps that we need to take when something is reported to us. A lot of people need to be held accountable here. School is supposed to be a safe place, needs to be highly regarded. Wrong on many counts.

Lashonda McLeod and Jennifer McLeod

Jennifer McLeod shared they were here to ask policy questions of the school, such as what policy is in place to protect students and families when a report is made? Is this the same process if the accused is a staff member? How do they handle that when the kids are coming forward with complaints, what is the proper protocol?

The second part is the Police budget and their job role. Does the Officer who was here earlier respond to these reports in school? Do they work with sex abuse advocates and other organizations who can help these students? Parents are also concerned about staff members who knew about the endangerment of students, but only teacher being investigated. What about other teachers and admins who knew about this potentially?

Jennifer said some of these might fall into privacy clause, but what happens with the initial report?

Superintendent Carter noted that if Jennifer could like to stay after, she would be happy to address that. Jennifer said she would like that and thanked her.

President LaValley inquired if Latisha was done with her meeting. Jennifer said what she (Latisha) wanted to ask was the questions just asked. President LaValley clarified that Latisha did not want the opportunity to speak a second time.

NEW BUSINESS

Summer Books for Middle School

Motion by Secretary Patty Poole-Gray to approve the Summer Books for Middle School in the amount of \$45,600.00 with the Funding Source being Title I Funds.

Vice President Kyra Wallace supported the Motion.

Motion passed 6 – 0.

**CONSIDERATION TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION
FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSIDERING THE
CONTENTS OF A CONFIDENTIAL
ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION**

Motion by Secretary Patty Poole-Gray to go into Closed Session at 7:20pm for the purpose of considering the contents of a confidential attorney-client privileged communication as permitted by Section 8(1)(h) of the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

Treasurer Charlie Fulbright supported the Motion.

President Catherine LaValley explained the Closed Session process.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 6 – 0.

CONSIDERATION TO RECONVENE

Motion by Treasurer Charlie Fulbright to Reconvene at 8:23pm.

Trustee Jacqueline Slaby supported the Motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 6 – 0.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Trustee Jacqueline Slaby thanked those who attended the meeting this evening and providing Public Comments. She said it was important for the Board to hear directly from Community members, students and families. She appreciated individuals waiting to comment while the Board was in Closed Session.

Secretary Patty Poole-Gray indicated she wanted to ditto Trustee Slaby's comment. She said the Board appreciates them attending and "we heard you".

President Catherine LaValley shared the following comments:

- She attended the visitation for Kathleen Wilkey, a long-time Urbandale parent volunteer for recess and the lunch room, who did a lot of things with Urbandale students.
- This Friday she is attending Gloria McDonald's memorial service at 11:00am at Baxter. Gloria spent 31 years at LaMora Park and provided tremendous dedication.
- She met an important visitor in Battle Creek, Dr. Ferris Hill. Dr. Hill is a motivational speaker who loves teens and kids and is excited about being in Battle Creek. There are Community Meetings scheduled this week to introduce Dr. Hill to the Battle Creek area. Dr. Hill wants to hear from BCPS about Teacher Appreciation coming up in May. He was in meetings at Southwestern Michigan Urban League this afternoon, it was a good reception. The BCPD was there, as well as Mayor Behnke. Dr. Hill provides a lot of experience and wants to create a purpose for people's lives. Additional events are posted on his website: ferristhill.net He might attend a local Easter Egg Hunt this weekend as well.
- This was an important evening for communication coming through. She was pleased to see the new Battle Creek Enquirer Reporter, Grayson Steel, and photographer, Alyssa Field, in attendance and she welcomed them both. She expressed her appreciation for all Community members and families who attended the meeting this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

President LaValley adjourned the meeting at 8:29pm.

Submitted by
Patti Worden

Minutes Approved: May 23, 2022


Patty Poole-Gray
Board Secretary