

BATTLE CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

December 13, 2021

Board Room at the Administration Building, 3 West Van Buren Street, Battle Creek, MI

5:30p.m.

PRESENT – BOARD OF EDUCATION

Catherine LaValley

Kyra Wallace

Patty Poole-Gray

Charlie Fulbright

Jacqueline Slaby (arrived at 5:41pm)

Art McClenney

Nathan Grajek

Present – Administration

Kim Carter – Superintendent

Mitch Fowler – Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Dr. Chandra Youngblood – Director, Elementary Education

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

Dr. Anita Harvey – Director, District Transformation

Pat McCann – Chief Executive Officer, Human Resources

Monique Cheeks – Director, Student Services

Rhonda Potts - Executive Director

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

Absent – Administration

Nathan Hunt – Communications Manager

Jeff English – Executive Director

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by President LaValley at 5:30pm. Catherine LaValley, Kyra Wallace, Patty Poole-Gray, Charlie Fulbright, Art McClenney and Nathan Grajek were present.

President LaValley read aloud our Mission Statement.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Vice President Kyra Wallace to approve the Agenda as presented.

Treasurer Charlie Fulbright supported the Motion.

Motion passed 6 – 0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephanie Marszalek
708 Cambridge Drive
Battle Creek
(269) 832-6662

Stephanie shared that she has been with BCPS for quite a few years and is proud to be here. She discussed an increase in behavioral incident and she feels this is not just a building or school problem, it is a District problem. She relates the increase to being post distance learning related because students are struggling to return in-person, resulting in an increase in outbursts and violence. She said it is traumatic for students and teachers. Teachers are having to step in to stop fights and they are being hit, which is why staff are leaving. It is not about the rigor in the classroom, but rather behaviors. All kids are capable of learning what we ask and we hold high standards for academics, she feels we need to do the same for behavior standards.

Anthony Pennock, BCEA President (speaking on behalf of BCEA)
125 Surby Avenue
Battle Creek
(269) 578-3435

Anthony reported that, as President of the BCEA, membership has directed him to provide following statement.

“On behalf of the members of the Battle Creek Education Association, we submit this Letter of No Confidence in regard to Superintendent Carter, Central Administration, and the policies of the School Board of Battle Creek Public Schools in relation to student behavior and discipline”.

Anthony read aloud the remaining contents of the Letter of No Confidence, referencing Trauma Informed Practices, Restorative Practices, BCPS Code of Conduct, the fidelity of these things being carried out, their concerns over student behaviors and discipline, teacher safety and this being a District-wide problem and not just a building problem.

Joe Ratti
48 Guest Street
Battle Creek
(269) 967-3829

Joe advised it is with a heavy heart that he admits he led the Petition for No Confidence. Joe said he loves this District and has worked his entire career here, 25 years. He said in all his time here, he has never experienced the amount of disrespect and danger to staff as currently. He advised that he broke up 4 fights the first week of school and 2 fights this week.

He is told daily to go “f himself” and has been called an “MF”. He has Multiple Sclerosis and noted this has been more stressful this year than ever before. He wakes up and worries about coming to work or that his legs will give out.

It has been a tough year coming back, some kids were left alone, many didn’t participate in schooling, but there aren’t consequences for poor behavior. Our programs are proactive but behaviors are so out of control. Parents won’t participate in restorative practices and we have students who refuse to give their names to Principals. He said, at that point, we have to try something else. We have to try alternatives to get respect back. There are kids wandering around the building and smoking weed in the bathrooms. We have to try something different.

Joe urged the Board Members, many for whom he voted because he lives in the District, to visit our buildings and see what’s going on.

Joe indicated he has talked to Superintendent Carter and she has wonderful ideas and he respects her, but he questioned how we can have policies that Principal Evaluations depend on how many kids are suspended and/or how behavior is handled. These practices are not going to solve the problem...(time limit was up).

President LaValley indicated Joe was afforded an extra 2 minutes to speak.

Trustee Jacqueline Slaby arrived at 5:41pm.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Motion by Treasurer Charlie Fulbright to approve the Consent Agenda items.

- A. Trust Fund/Comerica (Written only)
- B. Minutes of the Special Meeting on November 20, 2021 and Regular Meeting on November 22, 2021
- C. Bills for the Month of November 2021
- D. Personnel Changes and Recognition of Retirees
- E. Membership Report
- F. Finance Report

Trustee Jacqueline Slaby supported the Motion.

Motion passed 7 – 0.

REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Bond Update

Superintendent Kim Carter provided an update on the Bond and shared that we have an amazing Design and Construction Team that has joined us this evening to share where we are going now that we have passed an amazing Bond for our District.

Rhonda Potts introduced the Design and Construction Teams from C2AE, Elite, Christman and TMP.

- Bob McGraw, Architect/Educational Planner with C2AE discussed the Board Update presentation and shared that the Project Organization Slide should have indicated 1 Board Member would also serve on the Design Steering Committee.
- Ryan Long, President/Project Director with Elite, discussed the Bidding Process and Construction Sequencing.
- Tom McKercher, Architect/Project Manager with C2AE, discussed Supply Chain Demands, Project Approach and Timeline, noting the NWMS project should be completed in August 2025 and the SMS project should be completed in August 2024.
- Laila Miada, Interior Designer with TMP, discussed the Design Process and Engagement.

There was discussion that the Community Forums will include translators for our Spanish and Burmese families.

It was noted that individuals from the Elementary and High School, as well as the Community, will be included in the Forums about the design of Art spaces.

Superintendent Kim Carter shared that she wanted to celebrate Dr. Anita Harvey who is working to coordinate all of the User Group Meetings, to identify the right people to be involved and to keep things moving along so as to prevent the timeline being pushed back.

The consultants advised the design process typically takes 10 months and noted this will work out well for going out to bid in November of 2022, the ideal bidding time.

Superintendent Carter thanked the Design and Construction Teams for their work and continued partnership, as well as their help in getting the Bond across the finish line.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Administrative Appointment for Elementary Principal at Dudley STEM

Superintendent Kim Carter discussed the Administrative Appointment of Kavonna Matthews as the Elementary Principal at Dudley STEM.

Motion by Vice President Kyra Wallace to approve Kavonna Matthews as the Elementary Principal at Dudley STEM.

Treasurer Charlie Fulbright supported the Motion.

Motion passed 7 – 0.

2021-2022 General Fund Budget Amendment

Motion by Vice President Kyra Wallace to approve the 2021-2022 General Fund Budget Amendment.

Secretary Patty Poole-Gray supported the Motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 7 – 0.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Superintendent Kim Carter shared the following comments:

- Thank you to hardworking educators and staff who show up every single day. She indicated it is a difficult time for teaching and a heavy lift, not only at BCPS but across the Nation, and teachers are heroes for showing up to support kids. She noted it is unfortunate that we have teachers who feel they have not been heard and she looks forward to collaborating with them to create success for students and to create an environment where teachers want to come to work and educate students.
- Thank you to the Community for helping us pass the Bond.
- She encouraged everyone to take time to pause, reflect and relax during the Holiday Break.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Secretary Patty Poole-Gray commented she was not sure what happened with teachers today, but she hopes there is a deep dive into each building. She added she was a sub herself and got hurt and it was not fun.

Trustee Jacqueline Slaby echoed Secretary Poole-Gray's comment and said it is important to take this matter seriously and be transparent with the Community and Staff about the investigation, what we are doing to help and to have the right people at the table to transform the District for the better. She said it is very clear things are not happening the way they should, leaving teachers and other staff members frustrated. They need to be brought in and listened to and we need to find a better solution for what's going on.

Trustee Art McClenney commented as follows:

- He listened intently to what was said this evening and noted he has talked with Board Members from other Districts, who have experienced the same situations in their District. This issue is not unique to BCPS and is going on everywhere.
- He has every confidence in Administration and this District and is sorry that teachers felt they have not been heard.
- He would like to hear solutions for some of the issues because it is really easy for people to come up in public and say things.
- He doesn't support the No Confidence vote and would like Superintendent Carter and the Administrative Staff to make sure those who feel unheard are brought to the table and come with solutions. He said when something is not working, individuals shouldn't just come to complain, they should come with solutions too. No criticism meant. He would like to hear the solutions as well.
- He reiterated that he stands behind the Administration and this Board.

Trustee Nathan Grajek echoed Secretary Poole-Gray's comment and indicated he is very concerned about the things mentioned tonight from staff. He looks forward to an update from Administration soon about the resolution of this matter and he hopes the District can make changes.

Treasurer Charlie Fulbright commented as follows:

- The Public Comments heard tonight tugged at his heartstrings. He never wants hear that teachers are getting hurt in school.
- He is looking forward to visiting schools.

- Although this may be an issue across Michigan, he thought it would be cool if we were the first District to do something about it, as we were the first District to address Equity issues.
- He disagrees with Trustee McClenney about teachers having a solution and feels the teachers expressing themselves tonight was brave; they don't have to have a solution to express themselves and let the Board and Administration know what is going on. We need great collaboration work to be brought to the table, but the ultimate solution should be from Administration.
- Everyone is doing a great job and Great Things Are Happening at BCPS.

President Catherine LaValley shared the following comments:

- On behalf of the Board of Education, she completed sending Holiday Cards to the BCCHS Career Academies partners. She thanked Sarah Kerry for her assistance in this process.
- She attended the Brass Band Concert on Saturday evening, it was a terrific Concert. The Auditorium was festive in lights and the sound created magical experience.
- Jayden Parker, a BCPS student, was invited to participate in the Concert and played his trumpet alongside the Brass Band, playing a piece written specifically for the evening by Gail Robertson.
- The next Brass Band Concert is May 21, 2022. High School and Middle School Youth will have the opportunity to participate in Band Camps. There will be a one week camp at WK Kellogg Auditorium or a three day Middle School Camp at Marshall Schools.
- She appreciates the comments heard tonight and wanted the Facebook audience to know we had seats overflowing in support of the Public Comments being made. She appreciates those who spoke taking the opportunity to attend the Board Meeting and speak to Board Members.
- She reiterated the other Board Members' comments that no teacher deserves to be hurt when trying to deliver academics to BCPS.
- She hopes staff will remember they have someone to talk to, be it their supervisor, Principal, a Leaser on the Instruction Coaching Team, anyone who can hear their concerns or frustrations. She said this is something that has manifested itself into a really large issue and she was glad to hear the details given tonight.

- She hopes the Board has or will be given a copy of the letter presented by the BCEA President. She added it was a surprise and noted that any staff can be heard and she is impressed with Superintendent Carter's weekly video messages. There are all kinds of opportunities to be heard and to know this issue came to the Board four days before the Winter Break is amazing.
- We don't have all the answers, but these are fearful COVID times. She added the Board does want to hear about this and take the opportunity to get these frustrations resolved. The Board is here for action and they want to know about things that are happening that might not be good for education. She also knows that student behaviors being out of control is an ongoing problem across the State.
- We are not giving up on teaching staff and we want to be proactive, she thought it would be nice if BCPS takes a leadership role as a District and gets this issue solved. We are not asking for perfection, but there are lots of good resources for mental health strategies and students have to be willing to be open to things that could help them live up to their potential. Our academic expectations are rigorous and we need to look at behavior rigors. It will be important to make sure everyone is heard and she asked staff to please let Administration know about issues. The Board believes in teachers and all employees down to those who keep our buildings clean. We want our employees to be safe and our students to be learning. We need to solve this issue in a way that does not look backward.
- She wished everyone a wonderful Winter Break and the Happiest of Holidays. She asked staff to keep the Board informed and to lift each other up. She said fear has to have its place but we are better than this fear. She referenced the song she chose as part of her Board President message for the Back To School Ceremony, a song by the Zac Brown Band noting we are all in this together and all in the same boat.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41pm.

Submitted by
Patti Worden

Patty Poole-Gray
Board Secretary