

BATTLE CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting
December 19, 2020

Meeting held electronically pursuant to Executive Order 2020-15
Zoom identification number Meeting ID: 812 5442 2030
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT – BOARD OF EDUCATION

Catherine LaValley
Kyra Wallace
Patty Poole-Gray
Charlie Fulbright
Art McClenney – arrived at 10:34am
Jackie Slaby

Absent - Board

Karen Evans

Present – Administration

Kim Carter – Superintendent

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Catherine LaValley at 10:00a.m. Catherine LaValley, Kyra Wallace, Patty Poole-Gray, Charlie Fulbright and Jackie Slaby were present.

Vice President Catherine LaValley thanked incoming Trustee Nathan Grajek for joining us today.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Secretary Kyra Wallace to approve the Agenda as written.

Trustee Charlie Fulbright supported the Motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 5 – 0

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

DISCUSSION

Review of Strategic Plan

Superintendent Carter discussed the Agenda for today's Retreat, which includes a review of the Board Norms, Agenda, Strategic Plan Review and the Great School Board Meetings presentation with Ann Macfarlane.

Superintendent Carter suggested the Board engage in the work in a very informal perspective of conversation, deliberation and dialogue as a way of learning and keep an open flow of conversation. She noted this is a Work Session and not a Regular Board Meeting.

Superintendent Carter presented the Strategic Plan, which highlighted the following:

- Purpose
- The Governance Clock
- Strategic Plan

Purpose

The purpose of today's review is to ensure that all Board Members have a clear understanding of the goals outlined in the current strategic plan and the associated strategies defined by administration.

The Governance Clock

Review for public to understand the way in which we work and the adopted Governance Clock that usually sits on our tables and explains the Board authority and Superintendent authority.

The role of the Board of Education is not to run the schools, but to see that they are well run.

Superintendent Carter said today's purpose is to review how we work as a team to ensure that we meet the goal of 100% success for every Bearcat.

She said we know some things we do are working well, but there is always an opportunity to do things better. She asked the Board what they feel is going well and where there are opportunities to improve and be the best Board possible in 2021 and the best team.

Superintendent Carter asked the Board what things they think are working well:

- Trustee Charlie Fulbright thinks the Board has done well with letting each member ask a question before one member asks multiple questions, since he mentioned learning about that from Robert's Rules.
- Vice President Catherine LaValley thinks the Board does a good job of establishing goals for the upcoming school year and the Superintendent.

- Secretary Kyra Wallace thinks the Board does a good job of actually showing up. They engage to get the information necessary to go back and do whatever research they want to do to make informed decision.
- Treasurer Patty Poole-Gray thinks the Board does a good job of being prepared, noting they receive the Board Packet in a timely fashion, which is really great and it gives them time to go through it and be knowledgeable when they get to the meeting.

Superintendent Carter asked the Board where there are opportunities to work better as a team and increase the capacity to support the students and staff of BCPS, the following things were mentioned:

- Secretary Kyra Wallace mentioned it would help to have an understanding of which Board Members sit on the which Committees.
- Vice President Catherine LaValley mentioned listening to each other's thoughts with more understanding, be better listeners.
- Trustee Jackie Slaby mentioned the Board being at a high level to understand what is going on for the District and establishing policies, to have proposals presented in a larger framework and not a narrow focus, to know how they fit together to achieve the goals laid out.
- Superintendent Carter mentioned she has been reading literature on this and determined all Board works in different ways. It would be helpful for her in the Agenda Setting Meeting to look forward and also review what happened in the last meeting, i.e. were there any items needing follow-up, questions to be answered, this would help her stay focused on making sure she has given the information needed for decisions.
- Superintendent Carter mentioned the Board had agreed to switch to Committees, but many of the smaller Committees have gone away because it felt like not everyone had the same information. There are still some Committees running and we may need a deeper understanding about those.
- Vice President Catherine LaValley mentioned the Board combining the Finance and Physical Property Subcommittees and she felt that was important those be reinstated as we look at long range facilities needs and the bigger picture of where we want to be in 5 years with Sinking Funds and making sure our buildings are in tip top shape and ready to serve students and staff.
- Trustee Charlie Fulbright talked about the Board doing just that and Trustee Jackie Slaby being on the special Committee to discuss buildings and facilities. Superintendent Carter confirmed the buildings and facilities Committee and suggested the Board creating Committees as needed, rather than having Committees just to have them.

- Trustee Jackie Slaby liked that idea and said creating Committees as needed and dissolving them once the topic of exploration is done and approved by the Board. She discussed the reason the Board did away with Committees being the result of her going to an MASB conference and hearing about formats other Boards are using. The Board decided to have Work Sessions to discuss upcoming matters and then having a couple of weeks to share information back with the community, get questions answered by the Superintendent and Cabinet, have time to reflect and then come back a couple of weeks later to vote.

There was discussion about the 2019 Board Committees information provided in the Board Packet. Superintendent Carter asked as we move forward, how can the Board improve the Work Sessions for deeper discussions, so it doesn't feel like another Board Meeting.

- Trustee Jackie Slaby thinks the Board did a good job before COVID and developed the calendar with content for Work Sessions to have a sense of what was coming down the road. That plan fell off the radar with COVID and she hopes the Board can bring that back and be really strategic about what they need to learn about in Work Sessions.
- Secretary Kyra Wallace asked about the cadence of meetings and inquired about why the Work Session Agenda has to look the same as the Regular Meeting Agenda. It gives the Work Session the same feel as a Regular Meeting. She mentioned the Committee Meetings didn't look that way, the cadence wasn't the same. She wondered if that could play a role in what the Work Sessions look like and how the Board has discussions. Vice President Catherine LaValley liked the idea of the Work Session Agenda looking different and said we can work on that.

Trustee Jackie Slaby noted the Board should be clear on what that means, specifically that the Board Meetings will be longer. She is fine with that but hasn't experienced that for a few of her fellow Board Members. She suggested a better structure for Work Sessions would be for the Board to choose a couple of topics and take a deep dive into them, like a Committee would. She also mentioned it would be a better plan to vote on New Business items at the following meeting.

Secretary Kyra Wallace commented she is okay with Work Sessions being longer meetings to ensure we are being the most effective as a Board by creating policies and doing what they need to from a Governance standpoint. She pointed out the importance for Board Members to come prepared by having reviewed the Board Packet ahead of time and being familiar with the information in it.

Superintendent Carter noted Trustee Art McClenney joined the meeting at 10:34am. He had been watching the meeting on Facebook and was struggling with his signal to stay connected.

Superintendent Carter noted this was all really good conversation and something for the Board to discuss further at the Organizational Meeting in January where we will do a ceremonial welcome of Trustee Nathan Grajek to the Board and Board Officer Transitions.

There was discussion about the start time of Board Meetings and the reason we start at 5:30pm. It was noted that we don't start at 5:00pm because some Board Members work and need time to get to the meeting, the audience likely can't attend a meeting before 5:30pm for the same reason and we have Cabinet members and a Superintendent who have worked all day and need to get home in a timely manner. Superintendent Carter pointed out there is no perfect time that will please everyone, so we strive to do our best to be assessable while doing the work we need to do.

There was discussion about the length of Board Meetings changing if the Work Session format is changed. Board Members indicated that not being a problem and some stressed the importance of the Board being prepared for the meetings and not having to ask the same questions over and over or asking questions that the answer to was provided in the Board Packet materials. It was also mentioned it is helpful to reach out to Superintendent Carter and get answers to your questions ahead of time. Superintendent Carter noted this is most helpful because it is not fair to her staff to come to meetings and be asked questions they have not had an opportunity to prepare. This doesn't look good to the public either. It is important for the Board to hear questions being asked and answered and to see/hear the Board having deep dive discussions about various topics. There's a balance to be kept for allowing staff to be prepared with answers to questions, not appearing as though the Board is arguing about a topic, but not giving the impression the Board is rubber-stamping everything either.

There was discussion about getting the Board Packet earlier than the Thursday before the Monday meeting. Trustee Jackie Slaby indicated getting the packet the week before would be most helpful, noting that is how the City handles theirs. Superintendent Carter mentioned we do our best and Patti Worden, Executive Assistant, works out to get the Packet to the Board on Thursday. Trustee Charlie Fulbright CF commented it would be great to have the packet a week before, but we should commend ourselves because in the last 2 years he has attended MASB classes, he has heard that all other Districts send their packets out on Friday, Saturday or Sunday and the BCPS Board receives their packets on Thursday, so we are way ahead of the curve and still ahead of most other Districts in the State.

Ann Macfarlane of Jurassic Parliament joined the meeting. Superintendent Carter welcomed Ann and noted we were running a few minutes behind. Ann noted she was delighted to be here and is looking forward to the Great School Board Meetings discussion.

Superintendent Carter reviewed the Strategic Plan presentation, which included the following areas:

- Purpose of Today's Review
- The Governance Clock
- Six Goals for Greatness
- Strategic Process Mapping
- Strategy Review of Each Goal
- Year 1, 2 and 3 Milestones: High Academic Achievement
- Year 1, 2 and 3 Milestones: Healthy Organizational Culture
- Year 1, 2 and 3 Milestones: Human Capital Strategy
- Year 1, 2 and 3 Milestones: Active Partnerships with Our Community
- Year 3 Milestones: Effective & Efficient Use of Resources
- Year 3 Milestones: World-class Infrastructure

Vice President Catherine LaValley commented she is pretty proud of the Strategic Plan. When she first came onboard, after attending MASB classes, she couldn't say that BCPS had a Strategic Plan and in a short amount of time, the Board and Administration developed one and she is proud of these goals and strategies.

Superintendent Carter pointed out a need to make sure we are communicating what is happening in the background at BCPS so the community knows. She will work with the President in January to really think about how we can go deeper in understanding and sharing the Strategic Plan.

Superintendent Carter closed by saying "Great Things Are Happening at BCPS".

The Board took a 5-minute break before transitioning to the Great School Board Meetings training.

Robert's Rules of Order Training

Superintendent Carter welcomed Ann Macfarlane, Professional Registered Parliamentarian, with Jurassic Parliament.

Ann Macfarlane said it was great to be here and she had a great time at the MASB class a couple of years ago that a few Board Members attended.

Ann reviewed the Great School Board Meetings presentation, which covered the following:

- Introduction
- Our Topics
- Purpose – To inspire the Board to run great school board meetings.
- Disclaimer – Ann pointed out this is Parliamentary procedure but she is not an attorney and nothing here constitutes legal advice. She said if the school attorneys say something else, to follow the attorney’s advice.
- Robert’s Rules of Order
- Personal Commitment – Personal commitment is essential to achieve the goal of better meetings.
- Meeting discussion, Point of Order, and Appeal
- Minutes Approval and Purpose – It is recommended that Minutes record “action” or “summary” minutes, not detailed. Record what is done, not said. Include main points for certain topics such as conflict of interest.
- Items to Watch For – Main Motion, Amendment, Rules for Discussion or Debate, Inappropriate Remarks, Point of Order and Appeal, Tie Vote

Ann shared a video showing the different items to watch for and noted we will unpack these things in this training.

- Rules of Debate – No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
- Why We Don’t Follow This Rule – Boards tend to discuss their affairs in a conversational mode; In conversations, dominant people tend to dominate; Agreeable people tend to let them; Must have a structure to make sure that everyone has an equal chance to speak; This both fair and efficient
- Point of Order – When another member breaks one of the rules, a member may make a Point of Order. The Chair rules on the point.
- Language Tip – Use the “third” person to keep things neutral and lessen conflict; Note that the chair states the general rule; The chair is speaking on behalf of the Rules of Procedure; Do NOT say “You are out of order” or “You made a mistake”.

- Appeal Process and Explanation – The most important Motion in all of Robert’s Rules and the least known!
- Seeking Recognition
- Round Robin – A “Speaking Chart” template was provided
- System of Motions
 - Main Motions
 - Second the Motion, Eight Steps to Process a Motion (very important, knowing this puts you 90% ahead of your colleagues), Moving to Vote, Voting,
 - Amendment
 - Four Ways to Amend, Process Amendment, Fate of the Amendment, Friendly Amendment (Ann commented it being friendly because maker thinks it will improve the possibility of the Motion passing)
 - Refer to Committee, Process to Refer
 - Call the Question
 - Two-Thirds Vote, Process
- Precedence of Motions – Including a Precedence of Motions Worksheet and Chart

There was a 15-minute lunch break.

- Authority and Role of Chair, Members and Staff – Ann commented this is the most important part of the training.
Accountability Hierarchy, Voluntary Association, Key Points, Individual Authority, Individual Power, Board Member Duties, Bottom Line, Majority Rule is Key (Ann commented she was happy to see this was #2 in our Board Norms), Disagreement

Ann discussed the role of the Board and Staff in their positions, noting the Board is not in their positions because they are paid, they are in their positions because they care. She honors them for that service and thanks them for it, she feels it is a service not recognized by citizens.

- Inappropriate Remarks
Fundamental Guideline, Duty to Be Polite, Personal Remarks, Focus of Meetings, Remarks that are not Germane, Language Tip (Members keep their remarks to the topic under discussion, including a Cheat Sheet), Comment vs Disruption, Do Not Dialogue!, Guidelines for Public Comment in Local Government

Ann provided a script for 5 volunteers (Secretary Kyra Wallace, incoming Trustee Nathan Grajek, Trustee Charlie Fulbright, Trustee Art McClenney and Superintendent Kim Carter) to read through together covering some of the topics we have discussed.

- Efficient Meeting
Chair Duties; Board Members Duties; Must Read Packets in Advance; Should not have to ask a question at the meeting to which the answer is in the Packet; Send Questions to Staff in advance of meeting and not play “gotcha” with the staff; Include Proposed Times in Agenda and identify “all times approximate” and identify information, discussion and decision; Establish time limits; No discussion during voting; Unanimous Consent.
- The Right Kind of Control
Three Things You Must Have; Chair Must Control Who Speaks When; Duty to Obey the Chair; Duty; Generous Authority; How to Control; Keep Things Moving.
- Inside Job
Why Do We Need Rules; What is Your Energetic State at Meetings; Preparing for Meetings; Vision;
- Review and Next Steps
Keep in Touch; Take-Aways from Training; Four Fundamental Guidelines; Inappropriate Remarks Review, Motion Review.

Trustee Charlie Fulbright commented he loved learning about this and the class today was a refresher about Parliamentary Procedures.

Trustee Art McClenney commented this was a good training and refresher, he would recommend this class to his colleagues and he plans to attend the class again in the future.

Secretary Kyra Wallace agreed with her colleagues, this was a really, really good training and she appreciated the manipulatives used to bring points of clarification and concepts.

Trustee Charlie Fulbright mentioned the need for the Board to be aware of their body language and that it is showing respect, especially now that we are all virtual most likely until March.

Trustee Art McClenney commented he would have liked to hear what Ann had to say about social media, Facebook comments, etc.

Ann shared the first thing she would recommend is the District should have a policy that Directors have to be very clear about whether their account is personal or if they are posting as a District Director. She noted the Board and staff can say things on their personal page that they may not say for the District, however, harming the District is not allowed even on a personal page, it is a legal responsibility. Directors should not attack their colleagues; the results will not get us where we want to go.

Incoming Trustee Nathan Grajek thanked Ann.

Vice President Catherine LaValley commented she was very delighted with the training which was recommended by two Trustees.

Ann Macfarlane commented, from reading the Minutes, the Board is doing a great job, there is just some fine tuning needed.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Superintendent Carter thanked Ann for an amazing training that flew by quickly because it was engaging content and the way Ann presented the information. She commented the books Ann mentioned in the training have been ordered and will be mailed to the Board Members at their homes after the Holiday Break.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Everyone wished each other Happy Holidays.

Vice President Catherine LaValley requested that Patti Worden submit the Board's attendance at this 4-hour Retreat to Cindy Holmes at MASB so the Board Members receive credit for attending. Superintendent Carter requested that Vice President LaValley email Patti and herself with this request.

ADJOURNMENT

The Meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Submitted by
Patti Worden

Kyra Wallace
Board Secretary