

BATTLE CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting
November 23, 2020

Meeting held electronically pursuant to Executive Order 2020-15
Zoom identification number Meeting ID: 868 6339 1938
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT – BOARD OF EDUCATION

Karen Evans
Catherine LaValley
Kyra Wallace
Charlie Fulbright
Jackie Slaby
Patty Poole-Gray
Art McClenney (late arrival)

Present – Administration

Kim Carter – Superintendent
Anita Harvey – Director, District Transformation
Monique Cheeks – Director, Student Services
Mitch Fowler – Director, School Data Systems & Innovations
Nathan Hunt – Communications Manager
Laura Ash – Executive Director
Cheryl Johnson – Chief Executive Officer, Human Resources
Wes Seeley – Director of Grant, Federal Programs and Adult Education
Charles Lipsey – Director, Facilities and Operations

Absent – Administration

Chandra Youngblood – Director, Elementary Education
Deborah Nuzzi, Director, Secondary Education
Jeff English – Executive Director

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by President Evans at 5:30p.m. Karen Evans, Catherine LaValley, Kyra Wallace, Patty Poole-Gray, Charlie Fulbright and Jackie Slaby were present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Treasurer Patty Poole-Gray to approve the Agenda as written.

Secretary Kyra Wallace supported the Motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 6-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tyler Gilland
32 East Ave. S.
Battle Creek, MI 49017

I want to sincerely acknowledge the teaching and ancillary staff so far this year. You all are fighting an impossible battle every hour of every day. I have never seen a more dedicated group of people... for anything... in my life. You are spent, tired, and beyond exhausted. Yet, you show up every day and give more than you have! You bring phenomenal will and exceptional skill. You are a blessing to the community of Battle Creek!

Above and beyond that, I specifically want to name ALL of the staff at LaMora Park, Verona, Valley View, Dudley, Fremont, Post-Franklin, and Ann J. Kellogg. Your secondary colleagues have even more love and respect for the grit, resilience, and courage you bring every day with our students. The anxiety and fear you work through just to show up each day deserves an award! You all are the real MVP. Dumela.

Lastly, Bearcat Coaches, Student Success Specialists, Interventionist, Counselors, Literacy Tutors, CIS Site-coordinators, instructional coaches, and all other under-recognized staff... You are our tribe! I am another you and you are another me. I see you, I am with you, and I am beyond thankful for who you are and what you do for ALL Bearcats. Pandemic education is so difficult for us all. All of the BCPS staff and EduStaff employees give our community inspiration through this gut-wrenching year. You are my Heroes!

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

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

- A. Trust Fund/Comerica (Written only)
- B. Minutes of the Work Session on October 12, 2020 and Regular Meeting on October 26, 2020
- C. Bills for the Month of October 2020
- D. Personnel Changes and Recognition of Retirees
- E. Membership Report
- F. Finance Report

Vice President Catherine LaValley supported the Motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 6 – 0

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Administrative Appointment

Superintendent Kim Carter stated it was with great pleasure she would like to introduce and bring forward a recommendation to appoint Ms. Rhonda Potts as the Executive Director of Business & Finance. She shared it was a rigorous process and both an external and internal search. Ms. Potts is highly recommended to serve in this role.

Ms. Potts currently serves as the Business Manager for Quincy Community Schools where she supervises all the financial affairs of this District. She has thirteen years of experience in the finance profession working in public education.

She attained an Associate Degree in Applied Science, Business Administration from Jackson College and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Baker College.

Ms. Potts is an active member of the Michigan School Business Officials where she received certification as a Business Office Specialist. She also participated in the Chief Financial Officer Leadership Institute.

Her resume was provided in the Board Packet.

Superintendent Carter shared, as part of the process, Ms. Potts was interviewed by Don Sovey. Mr. Sovey provided a stellar recommendation for Ms. Potts and indicated she has a high level of confidence and is highly qualified. In a high market area, BCPS is fortunate to have a candidate of this experience and he recommends Ms. Potts for the Executive Director of Business & Finance.

Vice President Catherine LaValley asked when Ms. Potts will start. Superintendent Kim Carter indicated we are working on that, noting we want to give her time to notify her current District. Superintendent Carter will report this information in Board notes, once it has been determined, but it will definitely be by January 1st.

Vice President Catherine LaValley indicated she appreciated having Mr. Sovey's letter in the Board Packer because it was really helpful. She congratulated Ms. Potts on surviving quite an interview process.

Trustee Art McClenney joined the meeting.

Superintendent Kim Carter commented she works with 7 awesome members of the community and they welcome Ms. Potts to the team.

Superintendent Carter introduced Ms. Rhonda Potts.

Ms. Rhonda Potts thanked the Board for having her in their District. She is very excited to be a part of this. She commented it was nice to meet everyone. She indicated if anyone had any questions or concerns to feel free to reach out and we will work through whatever we need to, at any time.

President Karen Evans welcomed Ms. Rhonda Potts to the team.

WK Kellogg Auditorium Theatrical Lighting

President Karen Evans asked if there were any questions about this matter.

Trustee Jackie Slaby asked about the total of Auditorium project funding that she requested at the last meeting and if it was in the Board Packet. Superintendent Kim Carter advised it was included as part of the Recommendation. Laura Ash offered to go over it. Trustee Slaby indicated she wanted to look at the total before voting.

Secretary Kyra Wallace asked with this lighting project, once it is approved and has been completed, will all of the Auditorium renovations be complete and will the Auditorium be ready to utilize and rent out. Laura Ash advised we are getting ready to go out to bid for the final phase of the upgrades, which she will be bringing to the December Board Meeting asking the Board to approve the final lighting part of project. At that point, the upgrades. Laura anticipates a date to begin utilizing or renting might be March 1, 2021 depending on what transpires with COVID-19.

Trustee Jackie Slaby asked about the total of \$300,000+ since 2017 noted in the Recommendation and asked if that include the cost for the last phase just referenced. Laura Ash indicated it does not include the last phase just referenced because it has to go out to bid and we don't know the cost at this time. She anticipates it will be less than \$300,000.00 so the project total should be less than \$750,000.00 total. With these upgrades, the Auditorium should need no significant improvements for 15-20 years. Trustee Slaby asked if the funding for all of the renovations came from the WK Kellogg Foundation Grant and Laura Ash indicated they did.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

Trustee Art McClenney joined the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Administrative Appointment

Motion by Vice President Catherine LaValley to approve the Administrative Appointment of Rhonda Potts as the Executive Director for Business & Finance.

Treasurer Patty Poole-Gray supported the Motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 7 – 0

WK Kellogg Auditorium Theatrical Lighting

Motion by Vice President Catherine LaValley to approve the WK Kellogg Auditorium Theatrical Lighting in the amount of \$83,980.20 with funds coming from the WK Kellogg Foundation Grant.

Secretary Kyra Wallace supported the Motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken.

Motion passed 7 – 0

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Superintendent Carter shared the following:

- She reminded parents that we are fully remote from now to January 18th for Elementary (Grades K-5) and January 25th for Secondary (Grades 6-12). We will continue to work with the Calhoun County Health Department on when/if we can return in January, based on mitigation efforts and if they've been successful across the State.
- Thank you to Tyler Gilland for the wonderful thank you sent as a Public Comment. She is proud to work in a District with such a hardworking staff. She considers the BCPS staff to be Heroes and she always starts our emails to the staff by calling them "BCPS Heroes" because they serve the community to the best of their ability and go above and beyond for our students. At BCPS, we see every student by name, need and strength. Thank you to the staff who continue to work on that on a daily basis to make sure students continue to be educated.
- Right now athletics are postponed and we are waiting for additional information from MHSAA on what the next steps will be. She hopes to have more information on next steps to provide the Board at the December 7th meeting.
- The health of our students and staff is our first priority, along with making sure that students receive the highest education possible.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Vice President Catherine LaValley shared the following:

- She attended the Valley View Literacy Night which was online. There were 154 views of the Career Theme Night. Students of the Month were also recognized.
- She attended a successful Bond Campaign webinar on November 18th. A quick overview of the Bond was provided.
- She attended an informative MASB Conference, along with Trustees Charlie Fulbright and Jackie Slaby.

- She attended the beginning Bond Committee Meeting in which 20 people (parents, brass band member, faith based members, architects, staff, and construction managers) attended. President Karen Evans is a co-chair to the Bond Committee and they are still looking for another co-chair.

Superintendent Carter presented a look back and forward at our community needs. Architects discussed new improvements for Northwestern Middle School, which building is over 60 years old) and Springfield Middle School (built in 1965). Projected enrollments were discussed. The design curriculum team has met 4-5 times and has talked with parents and staff about revitalizing neighborhood schools. Northwestern Middle School has been mentioned as a catalyst for a revised school.

Dr. Anita Harvey shared the work of the design team to leverage what has already been done to disrupt the inequities and create the Northwestern Middle School neighborhood to be an asset. We have talked with GVSU about focusing on an Arts program and creating this education benefit for our Bearcats.

- There will be a Virtual Town Hall for Community Engagement on December 1st at 6:00pm. This will be an opportunity to learn more about a K-8 building for Northwestern Middle School and needed improvements for Springfield Middle School.

There will be a Planning Committee Meeting on December 2nd and a recommendation will be brought to the Board for the December 7th Work Session. Board approval will be sought at the December 14th Regular Meeting.

BCPS Administrators want to go in front of Treasury by January 1, 2021 to request the Bond. Despite the wacky COVID times, this will give another choice for BCPS students and families.

- In follow-up to conversations at the last Board Meeting about contacting our legislators, she sent emails to two House Representative and one Senator in support of extending the Open Meetings Act (OMA) by 6 months of a full year for remote open meetings. She heard back from Representative Mike Hall and Senator Dr. John Bizon. She was really impressed that Dr. Bizon called her and she thanked him for doing that. He would like to see an extension of the OMA law for at least 6 months into 2021 and would support an extension through December 31, 2021.
- The lobbyist from the MASB talked about four possible issues back on November 18th for the upcoming lame-duck session, the revision of the OMA Act for remote meetings and addressing the critical shortage of subs in the State of Michigan. Vice President LaValley and Trustee Slaby could not remember the other two issues.
- The MASB Priorities Survey for 2021 is available for Board Members to complete by December 10th.

Trustee Art McClenney wished everyone a safe holiday and encouraged everyone to mask up and keep their family safe.

President Karen Evans shared the following:

- Trustee Jackie Slaby reached out to her about Legislative Advocacy and the fact she thinks the Board needs to do more than what they are currently doing. President Evans noted the Board has come further than they have in the past but agrees there is more work to do. She indicated the Board will look at this issue at the next Work Session on December 7th and this will be an Agenda item. The Board will discuss whether they want to designate one person as a lead for this or if everyone wants to do work on their own. They will also discuss a possible Grassroots Advocacy Retreat. She asked Board Members to come prepared to discuss this at the December 7th Work Session.
- Thank you to the BCPS staff!! Our students are doing really well and that is because our staff rocks. They step up and jump through whatever hoop is thrown at them, the Administration included. The Administrators are the ones determining the hoops to be navigated.
- She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and be safe with family and friends.

The Meeting was adjourned at 6:00pm.

Submitted by
Patti Worden

Kyra Wallace
Board Secretary