

BERKELEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board of Education

Zoom Webinar

510-644-6206

Official Minutes

April 22, 2020

President Judy Appel called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. She reported that the Board convened to Closed Session at 5:30pm.

Roll Call

Board of Education:

Judy Appel, President – Present

Ty Alper, Vice President – Present

Ka'Dijah Brown, Director/Clerk – Present

Beatriz Leyva-Cutler, Director – Present

Julie Siniai, Director -- Present

Estella Hemp, Student Director, BHS – Present

Edwin Castro-Romero, Student Director, BTA -- Absent

Administration:

Brent Stephens, Ed. D, Superintendent

Baje Thiara, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services

Pauline Follansbee, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services

Samantha Tobias-Espinosa, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources

Lyz Chairez, Recorder

OPEN SESSION

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

At the request of President Appel item 11.4, Approval of Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Resolution 20-048, was pulled from Consent.

Motion to approve agenda as amended:

Alper/Appel and approved 6-0.

REPORT CLOSED SESSION

President Appel reported out on closed session:

Conference with Legal Counsel - Existing Litigation (Government Code Section 54596.9(a)

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Claim #17-097804, 130400208, 121000006, 200648886

Motion by Director Leyva-Cutler, Second by Director Sinai to accept the staff recommendation. All voted in favor and the motion passed 5-0.

Conference with Legal Counsel - Anticipated Litigation (Government Code Section 54956.9(b)) - One (1) Potential Case

The Board heard an update on this matter and provided direction; no action was taken.

Public Employment (Government Code Section 54957)

Motion by Director Sinai and Second by Vice-President Alper with respect to a public employment issue. All voted in favor and the motion passed 5-0.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

A total of two people addressed the Board:

One comment on distance learning recognizing all of the teachers' efforts to adjust and best support students.

One comment in appreciation of all of the initiatives put forth in an effort to close the achievement gap.

UNION COMMENTS

BFT Matt Meyers shared that BFT always endorses a candidate for school board elections and explained that those who wish to run should reach out to the BFT office to request a questionnaire. There will be a meeting on May 7 to meet and interview interested candidates. He also reported that BFT has been in communication with OFEE and BPSF to figure out how teachers can donate a portion of their stimulus check to undocumented families who are in need of and will not be receiving any financial assistance.

BOARD MEMBER AND SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Director Leyva-Cutler shared aloud a heartfelt letter encouraging families to not allow the possible stress of distance learning to damp their hope that soon this will be over and we will be able to reunite students with their peers and teachers.

Director Sinai thanked Director Leyva-Cutler for her words and teacher Cynthia Allman, who spoke during public comment, for her message on the importance of understanding the shift that we're experiencing in our schools and community. She went on to recognize all staff and families for the amount of change they are all grappling with and acknowledged all of the heavy lifting that is happening at every level.

President Appel shared her empathy for parents who are schooling their kids at home and sent her appreciation to all of the BUSD personnel who are deeply committed to making this experience as positive and productive as possible.

Superintendent Stephens gave a shout out to the King Middle School students who wrote him letters sharing their experience with distance learning. He shared aloud some of their questions and concerns. He reported that a large survey has been distributed and encouraged all secondary grade students to take a moment to complete it in order to help the district better understand how to support them. He went on to call out a few staff groups, recognizing their work during this transition. This included the newly constituted group of about 95 teacher leaders who, in addition to running their own classrooms, come together to assemble weekly activity sets that are being distributed to almost all teachers across the district; tech teacher leaders who signed up to help their colleagues navigate the new technology; and the Instructional Technology department which works tirelessly, including weekends, behind the scenes to make sure all runs smoothly. He announced that after 22 years of service to BUSD, Erin Shweng will be stepping away from her role as BHS principal. He thanked her for her work and wished her well on her future endeavors. Assistant Principal Juan Reygoza will be stepping up as acting principal during this transition.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to approve the Consent Calendar:
Brown/Alper and unanimously approved 5-0

ACTION ITEMS

Update on Coronavirus to the Board

Superintendent Stephens and BSEP Director Natasha Beery provided an overview of BUSD's response to Coronavirus. Beery noted that BUSD began sharing information about preventive action such as constant hand washing back in February. In March, BUSD began meeting with the City of Berkeley Public Health Department on a weekly basis, and eventually decided to close its schools later that same month. Since the initial reopening date was extended from April 6 to May 1, BUSD has shifted from short-term planning to thinking about school closures potentially lasting even longer.

The Superintendent requested that the Board approve recommendation to close schools for the remainder of academic year as recommended by the Alameda County Health Department, with the caveat that if the county decides that it is okay to return before then, we'll reconvene to plan accordingly.

He went on to share two documents. The first, a document issued by Governor Newsom as a guide to the reopening of schools. The second, a document, issued by San Diego County Office of Education in response to the Governor's roadmap, offering valuable perspective on what schools should be getting ready to contemplate as they plan for the summer and the fall.

In terms of planning progress, Dr. Stephens reported that BUSD continues to collaborate with Zoom to address security issues. Next update from Zoom will come this Monday. He shared that over 2500 chromebooks have been delivered, and an additional 130 hotspots are set to go out to students as part of efforts to facilitate access to technology to families. He added that staff is working closely with the Extended Learning program supervisors to design a distance learning version of BEARS and LEARNS. A work group will be created to plan for Fall 2020 . Dr. Stephens encouraged and welcomed feedback from the public.

Questions and discussion followed.

Motion to approve Superintendent's recommendation to extend school closure until the end of the school year with the caveat that if Alameda County Health Department indicates schools can reopen, this action will be revisited:
Alper/Appel and unanimously approved 5-0.

Approval of BSEP Program Plans and Budget for Library, Music/VAPA, and Technology

Natasha Beery presented an overview detailing budgets for the BUSD libraries, VAPA and Technology programs, and highlighted programmatic adjustments, as well as plans to support students during Covid-19.

Student board member Hemp joined at 8:48pm.

Motion to approve BSEP program plans and budget for Library, VAPA and Technology:
Slper/leyva-cutler and unanimously approved 6-0.

Approval of Superintendent's Recommendation for Reductions to the 2020-2021 LCAP Budget

Superintendent Stephens explained that the purpose of this presentation was to hone in on a series of targeted changes relative to the LCAP budget and supplemental funds in an approach to close the budget gap in the coming year, and does not represent a set of decisions to be incorporated into this year's LCAP.

Dr. Stephens stated that due to the disruption school closures have had on districts' budget development processes, it is possible that Governor Newsom may allow a 5 month extension for the LCAP. He noted that staff continues to track ongoing expenses and savings from Covid-19 school closures. While there is currently a savings of \$95,000 in the LCAP as a result of disruptions to programs and funding source transfers, the number of pressures on the LCAP budget point to a \$496,000 deficit this coming year. Dr. Stephens proposed addressing this budget gap by using unspent LCAP carryover, reducing extended day academic afterschool intervention (k-8), and shifting "Attract and Retain Teachers of Color" and the classified employee teacher

pathway to BERRA. In terms of the existing \$95,000 in savings, Dr. Stephens proposed redirecting it to expand the summer offerings. He concluded this presentation emphasizing that these recommendations are not intended to usurp ongoing community engagement as a 5 month extension is very likely, but are rather specifically targeted to address the funding shortfall in 2020-21.

Questions and discussion followed.

Director Sinai suggested amending motion to include a request that the Board write to the State Superintendent expressing that a 5 month extension for LCAP is not enough given the current circumstances.

President Appel responded that while there were many people in favor of a longer extension for the LCAP, there were also groups supporting educational equity that were in opposition to a major delay. She suggested following up with them to understand their reasoning.

Sinai agreed it was an astute thing to do, and withdrew her recommendation.

Sinai moved to action staff recommendation; Motion seconded by Alper and carried on a 6-0 vote.

Approval of Recommendation for Expenditure of BERRA Funds for Recruitment, Retention and Development Strategies 2020-21

Superintendent Stephens explained that this is a returning item from last week in response to the Board's request to postpone action to allow extra time for feedback from union partners. He said that we were not able to gather feedback in the course of the work week, but assured the Board that staff will be gathering the feedback. In the meantime, the request is for the Board to not its approval due to time-sensitive hiring issues included in this plan.

Leyva-Cutler proposed that this plan be revisited in January.

Motion to accept staff recommendation:
Leyva-Cutler/Brown and approved 6-0.

ADJOURNMENT
921pm