



**NOT FINAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE BOARD.**

**BURLINGTON BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL  
MEETING MINUTES  
Hunt Middle School Library  
April 12, 2017  
7 PM**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

**1. Opening Items**

Commissioner Curry presided over the meeting preceding the organizational vote for Chair. Commissioner Curry called the meeting to order and invited all those who are able to stand in body or spirit to pledge allegiance.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

**Commissioners:**

Mark Barlow X, Lauren Berrizbeitia X,  
Liz Curry X, Susanmarie Harrington X, Anne Judson X, David  
Kirk \_\_,  
Kat Kleman X, Mark Porter X, Stephanie Seguino X, Jeff Wick  
X

Not yet sworn in:

Ryan McLaren \_\_  
Kathy Otwell \_\_

**Student Representatives:**

Isabella Weston X

**Administration:**

Yaw Obeng, Superintendent X  
Brittany Nevins, Minute Recorder, Executive Assistant X  
Stephanie Phillips, Senior Director Teaching & Learning \_\_  
Nikki Fuller, Senior Director Human Resources & Equity Affairs X

Paul Irish, Senior Director Infrastructure & Technology \_\_\_  
Nathan Lavery, Senior Director of Finance X  
Marty Spaulding, Property Services Director \_\_\_  
Erik Wells, Communications Specialist \_\_\_

*The Board wishes to recognize, welcome and thank those that are providing language interpretation of the Board proceedings. The Board's commitment that all children receive equitable academic services must ensure that New American parents are welcome and can attend meetings, understand the process and be actively engaged. Interpretation of proceedings honors, respects and values our New American parents and students. The Board asks the public and media to respect and understand the importance of this interpretation.*

## **2. Swearing in of New Board Members**

**HR Director Nikki Fuller swore in Jeff Wick as the new Commissioner of South District.**

### **Approval of Agenda**

Commissioner Curry requested a motion to reorder the agenda as follows:

Move item 5. to become new item 3.

Move item 3 to item 4

Item 4 becomes item 6

Item 6 becomes item 5

The change would also move the Motion to Adjournment following the Executive Session, not before.

*Motion (Commissioner Harrington / Commissioner Wick) to approve agenda  
Unanimous vote in favor*

## **3. Integrated Arts Academy String Band Performance**

The group performed two songs for the School Board.

Principal of Integrated Arts Academy Bobby Riley, Arts Coach Judy Klima, ONE Strings Instructor Kathleen Kono, volunteer Barbara Barfield, and Director of Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival Jody Woos were in attendance.

The ONE Strings program is different from the District after school program, in that it serves the entire group of students versus students that sign up for after school. This is a difference of 88 kids in grade 4 & 5 that get ONE Strings and about 20 kids in grade 4 & 5 in the after school strings program. Additionally, the program reaches the entire population which serves the equity mission of the district. All students get instruction regardless of their socio-economic status.

Those present highlighted the value of music instruction on overall learning and that we at the IAA believe that our students engagement with this program helps to set them up for success as they move up into middle and high school. They also noted their high parent engagement, the way the strings program brings diverse students together, and that they are funded through highly effective and collaborative partnerships.

Commissioner Curry thanked the educators for making this happen and shared how impressive the students are, and mentioned the District-wide performance every February at BHS that includes all grades, from elementary through high school.

#### **4. Organizational vote for Chair/Vice-Chair**

As acting Chair, Commissioner Curry requested nominations for Chair.

*Commissioner Berrizbietia nominated Mark Porter for Chair; Commissioner Judson seconded the nomination and spoke in favor of the nomination.*

Commissioner Curry asked if there were any other nominations for Chair. Hearing none, Commissioner Wick asked if comments would be considered by the Chair. Commissioner Curry agreed to take comments about the nomination. Commissioner Wick expressed that a change in the District could be a good thing for students, staff, and the community. He will work cooperatively with Board leadership no matter who they are.

Commissioner Curry called for a vote on the nomination of Mark Porter for Chair. 7 in favor; Commissioner Wick opposed.

Commissioner Curry requested nominations for Vice Chair.

*Commissioner Barlow nominated Stephanie Seguino for Vice-Chair, Chair Porter seconds motion.*

Chair Porter makes comment in favor of nomination during discussion.

Commissioner Curry requested a vote to approve **Stephanie Seguino for Vice-Chair**.  
- 7 in favor; Commissioner Wick opposed.

Commissioner Barlow asks if the Clerk position needs to be voted on at this time. Chair Porter says that there does not need to be a vote at this time.

### **Public Comments/Questions**

#### **A. Public Comment-**

**Fran Brock-** BEA President and History Teacher at BHS Reads statement (See statement attached to minutes)

**Joanna Grossman-** PTO representative for Champlain Elementary. She shares that she is happy to see that there is a new Communications Specialist. She offers up suggestions regarding communications to the community. She shares that advance notice of meetings could be improved. Additionally, a stack of agendas would better help community members follow along at meetings. She also discusses class ratios. She describes an experience her daughter had in her classroom and the imbalances of teacher/student ratios that are not consistent and dependent upon the circumstances at hand. She offers the invite for Commissioners to more regularly visit the schools.

**Jim Holway-** Lives in the HMS neighborhood and is happy to more easily be able to attend meetings as they are close by. Welcomes Jeff Wick and Ryan McLaren as new commissioners. He also thanks the outgoing School Board members for their work.

#### **B. Board Reflections-**

Superintendent Obeng- Reminds the School Board that the mediator in the negotiations process has asked that both sides not to provide comment to the public or the media at this time.

Commissioner Judson- Reminds the public that the agendas for regular School Board meetings are posted 48 hours in advance.

Commissioner Harrington- Reflects on the String Band and the importance of educating students and is happy in the array of topics brought up tonight.

Commissioner Berrizbeitia- Shares that many School Board members have students and connections to students in the District and that many Commissioners are in fact in the schools often.

## 5. Board Report

- A. Report on NSBA Conference (Presentation available on boarddocs.com in 4/12/17 agenda)

Commissioner Judson shared her lessons learned from her attendance at the National School Board Association Conference in Denver in March.

- B. Policy Governance Priorities (Presentation available on boarddocs.com in 4/12/17 agenda)

Commissioner Harrington provided an overview of policy governance to help describe what it is to the public.

Chair Porter stated that presentations are to be attached to agendas so the public can view them in advance.

Commissioner Wick shared that he felt a finance committee should be retained as we transition to a Policy Governance structure.

- C. Work Group/Committee Assignments

Chair Porter shared that one of the great pieces of the Policy Governance framework is that committees, ad-hoc workgroups, and community work exist to help the Board meet its responsibilities to serve the community. In the past, subject-expertise remained within the committee which left other Board members unfamiliar with committee efforts and progress. This left a void in transferring this knowledge to community members.

To align efforts within the Policy Governance framework approved by this Board, Chair Porter has asked these commissioners to lead the following responsibilities:

1. Mark Barlow to become the Legislative Liaison with the charter of building the communication pipeline between this Board and local Vermont legislative leaders. Additionally, Mark will participate in legislative information gathering and help us better understand the decisions being made in Montpelier while making sure our views are heard there.
2. Liz Curry to become the Burlington City Council liaison with the charter of fostering relationships with all Councilors and ensuring we cohesively work to optimize our resources and efforts for the good of this community. Liz will also be appointed as Board Clerk, a position she has held for a number of years and has performed with exceptional skill and tenacity.

3. Anne Judson to lead our efforts in building trusting relationships among all Burlington Parent-teacher organizations and insuring the PTO's have the most current information. Anne, in turn, will be the voice of these PTO's to the Board.
4. Susanmarie Harrington to lead the ongoing efforts to refine our Policy Governance processes and deliverables and continue the education of this Board in maturing in these efforts.
5. Lauren Berrizbeitia to lead the Diversity & Equity Committee to protect the committee momentum and drive Diversity & Equity's successful representation within Policy Governance.
6. Stephanie Seguino to lead the Negotiations Committee through this year's sessions with the BEA and insure another successful settlement for all members of the community.

Additionally, a budget workgroup will be formed later this year and activated only for the period needed.

Chair Porter recognizes that a few committees are missing. This is because the entire board will now own the acceptance of the Superintendent's reports concerning Finance, Infrastructure, Curriculum, and Governance. Additionally, ad-hoc and time-based workgroups may be formed during the year at the service of the board which will allow the Board to react quickly to changing circumstances and needs.

Commissioner Curry reminds the group that there will be a Board Retreat on May 2nd where Consultant Michael Healy will be able to clarify the difference between ad-hoc committees and workgroups

#### Reflections on Senate Education Committee Visit to BHS

Commissioner Barlow shares what occurred during the Senate Education Committee Visit and talks specifically about the Equalized Pupil Formula. Those present asked the Committee to change the formula and add categories to better reflect the needs of EL Learners.

Superintendent Obeng shares that he received positive feedback from the Committee. He thanks the Burlington High School staff for hosting the group in the building and thanks Nathan Lavery, Senior Director of Finance, and Miriam Ehtesham-Cating, Director of EL Programs. for their efforts to provide compelling research and evidence to the group.

Commissioner Curry thanks Commissioner Barlow for finding the time to attend the meeting.

**D. Upcoming April 18th Special Board Meeting to Approve Vendor Contracts**

Chair Porter discusses briefly the need for a Special Board Meeting to approve time-sensitive vendor contracts.

**6. Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Obeng reflects on the Lockdown that occurred at Essex High School. He takes the opportunity to share that there are procedures in place to ensure that students are safe in our schools.

Superintendent Obeng wants communications to go directly to Central office to be able to effectively and efficiently communicate when crises occur.

**A. Audit Follow Up (In Board Docs)**

Nathan Lavery presented a summary of the District's plans to address issues raised in the management letter. He highlighted the issues that will be specifically targeted for remedy in the coming fiscal year.

Chair Porter asked: Do we have deliverable dates?

Senior Director of Finance, Nathan Lavery, says no. There are many factors involved in this, such as scheduling training.

Commissioner Curry asks about bank accounts for PTO's. The PTO's are not independent nonprofits so when the groups apply for grants there is no way to do that. Is there a way?

Nathan Lavery says that there haven't been solutions determined yet but the problem has been identified.

Superintendent Obeng shares new opportunities for fundraising for PTOs.

Commissioner Barlow asks a question regarding accounts and the process of creating new accounts/updating accounts. Is there an estimate for the value of accounts that are not on District books?

Nathan Lavery shares that the District is working on bringing everything into the central accounting system.

Commissioner Wick asks about the management letter and what the timeline would be to fix the issues stated in the management letter.

Nathan Lavery expects progress on the highlighted areas over the next year.

Chair Porter reminds the group that until recently, the District has not had an audit that was separate from the City of Burlington's audit.

Superintendent Obeng reminds that the reports over time on the District Website. The District and Board will be able to look at the progress over time the more we have audits done.

#### B. Routine Finance Updates (In Board Docs)

These reports had previously been done in the Finance Committee so this is an effort to inform the Board regularly around financial items. The Board will determine how often these updates will need to occur.

Commissioner Harrington asks what's driving the Special Education Variance numbers?

Senior Director of Finance Nathan Lavery says that the revenue for Special Education includes a portion that is reimbursement driven. Estimates received from the State of Vermont during the budget development process appear to overestimate these reimbursements.

Nathan Lavery shared that the highlighting within the document helps the Board understand key pieces to look at and how to interpret the various categories.



Commissioner Seguino asks why the Professional Services expenditure is significantly different than the budget amount.

Nathan Lavery describes that the timing and patterns of the fiscal cycle cause it to be higher later in the fiscal year.

Commissioner Wick looks at the description for professional services and comments that this has gone up every year.

Nathan Lavery describes some reasons why this is, for example, the increase of Kelly Sub Services over time. The District has taken some action to work on this. One example is that the District brought back “District Subs.” Schools expressed that the benefit of these positions were very high. The options in Kelly Subs is half day or full day, but there are situations that arise for a briefer time off. This is an example of providing better service and lowering cost.

Superintendent Obeng adds that there has been a lot of cleaning up the budget lines over the last couple of years, including trainings and review of coding, etc which complicates efforts to compare spending across years.

## 7. **Consent Agenda**

*Motion to Approve Consent Agenda*

*Unanimously Passes*

**Student Report-** Juniors at BHS just finished testing. At the high school the YES program was just announced. Kids are excited for break!

Commissioner Harrington shares an update from Edmunds Middle School regarding the Literacy Competition, a competition that has traditionally been very successful and continues to be. The topic of the competition was Global Climate Change. Also the Edmunds music cabaret was “rocking” this past week.

Commissioner Klemen shares that the production of Willy Wonka at Hunt Middle School was great.

Student Representative Weston adds that interviews are underway for the other student representative role to the Board.

**8. Executive Session**

- A. Motion to consider Executive Session to discuss Contract Negotiations where premature disclosure to the public could put the District at a disadvantage and to consider employee personnel matter.*

*(Commissioner Porter/Commissioner Judson)*

**9. Adjournment**

- A. Motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.*

Delivered to the Burlington School Board, April 12,-2017  
Fran Brock, BEA President

On behalf of Burlington's 400-plus teachers and paraeducators let me extend a welcome to the new and returning board commissioners. Let me also extend an invitation to all of you to visit our classrooms and other school facilities so you can better understand what it means to educate Burlington's students.

As you know, the School Board is sanctioned by the state of Vermont to oversee the policies, budget and management of the school district. A crucial aspect of your charge is to negotiation fair and honest contracts with district employees. The BEA – both the teachers and paraeducators – currently are in negotiations with you, the School Board. As you also know, the city came very close to dealing with a teachers' strike in the fall because the former school board chose to use its last resort of imposing working conditions rather than negotiate in good faith. The Board and BEA met with a mediator yesterday and another session is planned. It is my fervent hope that you, a newly constructed school board, will work cooperatively, constructively and respectfully with us to settled a contract that serves the community; one that insures that Burlington is able to attract and retain the

best teachers so our students receive the best education possible. As I have said before, a teacher's workplace *is* the student's learning environment.

The BEA continues to be grateful to the citizens of Burlington who have generously supported budgets put before them. This past March, voters approved a budget that brings to the district \$6 million in new money over the past two budget cycles. We hope that you, the Board of Commissioners, will provide the oversight to insure that the money is allocated in such a way as to make sure that the funding goes to the rigorous and supportive programming that is required and expected of all of Burlington's students.

Burlington is home to an impressive and expansive array of students. The diversity – regardless of how you might define that word – provides the schools with both cultural richness and challenges. Historically, Burlington's teachers, paraeducators and administrators have worked cooperatively in their efforts to meet the diverse needs of its students. As you organize and take on your responsibilities, I hope that you as the Burlington Board of School Commissioners, will not falter in maintaining the excellence expected of our city's schools.