

BERKELEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education
1231 Addison St., Berkeley, CA 94702
510-644-6206

Official Minutes
January 6, 2021

President Ty Alper called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. He reported that the Board convened to Closed Session at 5:30pm.

Roll Call

Board of Education:

Ty Alper, President – Present

Ka'Dijah Brown, Vice President – Present

Julie Sinai, Director/Clerk – Present

Laura Babitt, Director – Present

Ana Vasudeo, Director -- Present

Miles Miller, Student Director, BHS – Present

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 Alper, item 11.1. Human Resources Report was pulled.

Motion to approve agenda as amended:

Babitt/Sinai and unanimously approved 6-0.

REPORT CLOSED SESSION

Vice President Brown reported out on closed session:

Public Employee Discipline/Dismissal Release (§ 54957)

The Board heard an update and gave direction.

Collective Bargaining - Government Code Section 54957.6(a) (District Negotiator:
Samantha Tobias-Espinosa)

Berkeley Council of Classified Employees (BCCE)

The Board heard an update. No action was taken.

Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT)

The Board heard an update and gave direction.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

A total of five people addressed the Board:

Four comments in opposition to school reopening

One comment in request of update on the impact of DL on the most vulnerable students, particularly on the impact on meal access.

UNION COMMENTS

BFT President Matt Meyer thanked all for their well wishes on the birth of his new child. He also thanked BFT Vice President Janine Waddell for her work on behalf of BFT during his leave. Mr. Meyer commented that the safety restrictions imposed statewide add to the science based concerns teachers have about returning to in person instruction now. As of now, contractual agreements made in October have not been met. Teachers need to be able to rely on timely testing results and be informed of positive cases in the district. At the center of BFT's proposal is that a return to in person instruction should be voluntary for teachers. This provision is in consideration of the various scenarios impacting teachers who have to care for ill family members, face child care barriers and are experiencing the same challenges as our families. Forcing teachers to return will result in a great number of leave of absences and will further impact staffing. Another key element in BFT's proposal is the request for a robust COVID testing program for students. In compliance with CDC guidelines, BFT also proposes that Alameda County reach the orange tier before reopening schools. One of BFT's major concerns is that shifting resources and focus to a hybrid reopening model that will benefit some students will dismantle the distance learning structure that other students rely on. There is no easy solution, but balancing these needs is the primary focus of ongoing negotiations with the district.

BOARD MEMBER AND SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Director Babitt thanked those who participated in public comment. She looks forward to engaging in work that will allow us to emerge stronger together and drive the district towards equity.

Director Vasudeo also thanked all who participated in public comment. She is hopeful about the ongoing negotiations with the district's labor partners. Staff continues to work diligently to keep up with the influx of new information from the Governor's office and public health officials. With respect to the EL Master Plan, the goal is to update it this year via a robust planning and community engagement process.

Student Director Miller shared on behalf of his peers that a big part of mental health is more than just teaching students about mental health, but rather doing something to ensure that student mental health is addressed.

Director Sinai said that in light of the challenges facing our country's democracy, she appreciates the Berkeley community and the respectful manner in which it expresses its differences. She announced that the 10th Annual MLK Breakfast themed BLM will be held on Jan 18 at 9am. She reported that Alameda county has begun vaccinating health care workers and she is hopeful for the next round of vaccines for essential workers, including teachers.

Vice President Brown thanked everyone present tonight. She also thanked Director Sinai for announcing the annual MLK Breakfast. She acknowledged that today has been a heavy day for many of us and encouraged everyone to keep that in mind as we interact with one another. She appreciated the public comment concerning the impact of distance learning on the most vulnerable students. She looks forward to the update on the 21st.

Superintendent Stephens offered a preview of topics planned for the January 21 meeting, including a presentation on workforce housing, an update on the longfellow modernization project, an update on the middle school student assignment process, and a presentation on distance learning. We also anticipate being fully into our budget development season. He noted that this is a special budget building year in which the district will be rebuilding the LCAP plan. He thanked the educators returning from winter break while facing an unprecedented set of circumstances as they support students to make sense of what has been happening in our country over the course of the last two days. Dr. Stephens welcomed Max Eisler who will join BUSD as the new director of technology.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to approve the Consent Calendar (without item 11.1):

Brown/Vasudeo and approved unanimously 6-0.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Update on BUSD's Phased Approach to School Reopening

Dr. Stephens reported that the rate of hospitalization and the use of ICU beds have risen significantly since late November. With respect to the state's color tiered system, Berkeley is well above the red tier relative to cases and in the red level as it relates to test positivity. If these metrics continue to improve to red levels by January 11, permission to reopen may be granted on or about February 16. Dr. Stephens' presentation highlighted some key details from Governor Newsom's Safe Schools for All Plan which includes a \$2 billion proposal to support safety measures for schools that have resumed in- person instruction or phasing in of in-person instruction by early

spring. BUSD will continue to work with its liaison in the public health department to better understand how these elements will be implemented at the sites. With regard to hybrid learning, the district continues its collaborative efforts with its labor partners. Dr. Stephens noted that during bargaining in December, BFT responded favorably to BUSD's proposed hybrid learning model for Early Childhood Education and Elementary Schools. This model provides a balance for teachers between the varied needs and desires of parents, maintains stability during distance learning in the morning, and adds afternoon in-person learning to the current school experience. Some of the key differences between BUSD and BFT are teachers returning voluntarily versus all staff being expected to return with the exception of those with district-approved accommodations to work from remotely, mandatory testing for all students versus adhering to the state's exclusion of student testing as a requirement for reopening, and establishing the orange tier as the reopening threshold if in-person teaching is voluntary versus adhering to the red tier as the reopening threshold as described by the state. Questions and discussion followed.

ACTION ITEMS

Public Hearing for and Approval of Resolution 20-021 to enter into an Energy Service Contract with Schneider Electric for the HVAC Modification Plan in Response to the District's COVID Mitigation Plan (Time Certain: 8:30PM, which means that the hearing will begin no earlier than 8:30PM).

EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENT

A total of three people addressed the Board:

Two comments in opposition to the reopening of schools.

One comment on bft and busd negotiations.

ADJOURNMENT

8:39pm