

# The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn  
119 Gorman Road  
Brooklyn, CT 06234

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Mae Lyons, Board Chair  
Keith Atchinson, Secretary  
Tana Jolley

Melissa Perkins-Banas, Vice-Chair  
Justin Phaiah

**Mission:** The Brooklyn Schools will foster a drive for learning within each student to reach his/her greatest potential. To achieve this mission, the school will continually improve its educational programs and services to meet this community's expectations for a quality education for all.

The Brooklyn Board of Education held their monthly meeting virtually on March 24, 2021 via Zoom. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Phaiah, and Mrs. Jolley. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, and Mr. Otto, Board of Finance, were also present. Mr. Atchinson was absent.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Brooklyn Board of Education will conduct a virtual meeting in accordance with Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7B.

To support public participation the documents will be posted on the  
Town of Brooklyn Website as well as the Brooklyn Public  
Schools Website.

You are encouraged to send questions or comments to [buell@brooklynschools.org](mailto:buell@brooklynschools.org) prior to the meeting.

1. Attendance, Establishment of a Quorum, Call to Order

Quorum established. Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Approval of Minutes

a. February 24, 2021 BOE Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 24, 2021.  
(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)  
No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Mrs. Lyons stated that there is an added agenda item 3b for Board Vacancy Interviews.

b. Board Vacancy Interviews

There are three community members, Kayla Burgess, Ailla Wasstrom-Evans, and Nate Richards, that are interested in filling a Board of Education vacancy as an interim Board member until the election in November, 2021. The Board asked each candidate to provide information about themselves and state why they are interested in being on the Board of Education.

The Board is not ready to make a decision this evening. All three candidates are great choices and feel they don't have enough information at this time.

Mrs. Buell stated that the Board can submit questions to her and she will forward their questions to the three candidates.

#### 4. Correspondence and Communication

##### a. Thank you letter - CT Agricultural Education Foundation

Mrs. Buell stated she sent a thank you letter to Mr. Fuller with the Connecticut Agricultural Education Foundation for donating twenty-seven (27) "Tales of the Dairy Godmother" books to Brooklyn Elementary School classrooms in "recognition of their unique program learning about ice cream through reading, writing, and experimenting."

##### b. Norwich Free Academy - Brooklyn Annual Profile 2019-2020

Mrs. Buell stated she received Brooklyn's Profile Annual Year-End Report from Norwich Free Academy for the school year 2019-2020, Class of 2020.

##### c. Academy Excellence - Christopher Dooley (11th grader)

Mrs. Buell stated she received a letter from Ms. DeDonato, Bradlaw Principal at Norwich Free Academy, recognizing Christopher Dooley, an 11th grade Brooklyn student, for receiving the Academy Excellence Award as Student of the Month for March 2021.

#### 5. Administrative Reports

##### a. Brooklyn BOE Expenditure Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the expenditure report. She stated that 97% of the budget has been expended. Some of the line items are showing negative balances that will be offset with revenues still coming in from excess costs. Expenditures are being watched carefully.

##### b. Enrollment Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the enrollment report. She stated that in person learning has

increased and is shifting everyday. Mrs. Buell stated that the secretaries in both schools have done an amazing job managing the enrollment for Brooklyn students. There will be more students shifting from distance learning to in person learning April 5, 2021, which begins the next marking period.

c. Brooklyn's Best - BMS Student Presentation

**BES**

- Thank you to our nursing staff that is working around the clock to foster a healthy school community.
- Thank you to the PTO for providing a fun, inspiring virtual assembly with the Harlem Wizards. Our students were thrilled to see all their classmates on Zoom enjoying a very interactive, positive assembly.
- A huge thank you to the entire BES staff for pitching in with lunch and bus coverage during times that we have been short-handed, giving our all for the students.
- Congratulations to the Kindergarten team that has completed the largest percent of ST Math this year with Mr. Briere's class having the highest percentage completed with the other classes close behind.
- Our students have made drastic progress in Lexia. We started the year with 38% working on below grade level material, 50% on grade level material and 12% above grade level material. We now have 23% working on below grade level material, 40% on grade level material and 37% above grade level material.

**BMS**

- Quarter 2 Lions Club Award Recipients:  
Grade 5: Donnovin Grenier  
Grade 6: Kaitlyn Thiffeault  
Grade 7: Giavanna Diaz  
Grade 8: Kaylee Spring
- Thank you to our school nurse, Sherry MacFarland, for all of her hard work during and outside of the school day to foster a healthy school community.
- Thank you to the PTO for providing a Harlem Wizards Virtual Assembly for a common school experience.
- We celebrated our full return to in-person learning with a variety of activities through the first week to celebrate friendship and togetherness!
- Keep an eye on the front of the middle school as our fall bulbs that were planted are starting to grow.
- We have started our fundraising campaign for a new community fitness course. There is a team of teachers planning fundraising events and reaching out to local businesses for support in this large scale project.

**District**

- The Town of Brooklyn, Brooklyn Parks and Recreation, and the Brooklyn Public Schools are working collaboratively to offer summer opportunities

for students to finish learning, and to interact with their peers through Summer Academy and Summer Camp! We are able to offer this using grant funds to support student learning following a year of disruptions and for some, limited interactions with their peers. The funding for this is anticipated as part of the American Rescue Funds.

- Brooklyn Staff have received their first vaccination on March 9, 2021 and their second vaccination will be on April 6, 2021. Staff who received the vaccination in the school will be fully vaccinated on April 20, 2021! We are grateful to NDDH and the many volunteers who were here to administer the vaccinations!

**BMS Presentation:**

Mrs. Buell shared a video of Mr. Carson, 5th grade teacher, and a few 5th grade students, Shannon, Ava, Brody, and Lila, who discussed their Egg Drop experiment on trying to keep an egg from cracking when dropped from the roof of the middle school. Students reflected on their design, outcomes and how they could make improvements to their experiment.

d. BMS Community Fitness Course

Mrs. Wimmer presented the Brooklyn Middle School Community Fitness Course sponsored by the BMS Booster Club, which is a group of teachers, administrators and community members. Administrators and teachers wanted to have other equipment for a playground other than monkey bars for the Brooklyn Middle School students. The Booster Club is proposing a walking track, not used for track meets, and 10 workout stations in the upper field. The track would be a passive walking track that is used by students, staff, Physical Education (PE), and can also be available to the community. The projected cost is approximately \$100,000 and the Booster club will raise the money. This course will allow students to have active participation at recess, during PE, and for student athletes to have conditioning. Mrs. Wimmer stated that community members have already offered excavation, laying of bricks and foundations. Some of the station activities include balances, strength training and range in price starting at \$2,000 to \$20,000 per station. As money is raised, stations will be installed. Mrs. Wimmer stated that the Booster Club already had a Krispy Kreme fundraiser and plan on having another one in the spring. They are also trying to have a virtual, or in-person 5K course, when it is safe. They are looking for community sponsors and doing a brick project that is similar to the elementary school. Mrs. Tamsin has applied for a grant and should have a decision on the grant in the summer.

e. Summer Academy: Finish Learning

Mrs. Buell stated that the Summer Academy and Summer Camp will be taking place this summer. Notices will be going out at the end of March for the Summer Academy, which will run Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

6. Board of Education Committee Reports

Dr. Perkins-Banas stated that the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation met and Summer Camp will be offered free to the community through ESSER funds and coincides with Summer Academy. She stated that students who attend the Summer Academy are also eligible to attend Summer Camp from 1:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., which allows students to do both.

7. Board Representatives to other Committees

Nothing to report

8. Old Business

a. 2021-2022 Budget Planning Review

Mrs. Buell stated there was a budget meeting earlier this evening. The Board voted on the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for the 2021-2022 school year. The subcommittee did have a majority that voted for the \$19,629,374 or 2.38% increase over last year's budget. Mrs. Buell stated that some of the high costs relate to salary increases, and insurance increases. There were some savings in high school tuition and program changes. Mrs. Buell stated that the subcommittee had voted: 3 members voted in favor, and 1 abstention. Since the same members are present during this Board of Education meeting, there will be no vote this evening, it will be extended to another date.

Mrs. Buell stated that additional grant funds are included in the budget for next year that will address learning loss or continuing learning for the students that have had interruptions to their learning this year. There will be intervention support as well as coaching in the Summer Academy and Summer Camp for the next two years.

b. Budget Transfers

Mrs. Buell discussed the budget transfers she would like the Board of Education to approve.

Motion to approve the line item transfers as discussed in the amount of \$179,462.85.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

c. Learning Model Update

Mrs. Buell stated that all students have been in school since March 8, 2021. Students are following the mitigation strategies. She stated that we have had 11 positive COVID cases since March and we have had in school transmission based on the numbers. We have quarantined 4 classrooms and one bus. There are other individuals who are in quarantine that did not require closing down a classroom.

Mrs. Buell stated following mitigation strategies is critical to our ability to fully educate our students. More students have returned to in-person classes. She stated that we are still hoping to begin sports if we have coaches for baseball, softball, and track. Staff have received their first vaccination and will receive their second on April 6, 2021. There will be an hour delay for staff to be vaccinated and with people having a reaction with the second vaccination, Mrs. Buell presented the April 7th Learning Plan:

- Staff will pre-record lessons in the event that they are not well enough to teach.
- Students will have a remote learning day at home.
- Teachers who are well enough to teach will teach from the school building on that day, others who are sick will stay home sick and students will access learning online.

Mrs. Buell stated that on March 19, 2021, Governor Lamont's Executive Order Regarding travel is no longer in effect. Connecticut is recommending that we follow the CDC Travel Guidance, which states:

**Get Tested and Stay Home After Travel**

- Get tested with a viral test 3 to 5 days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel.
  - Even if you test negative, stay home and self-quarantine for the full 7 days.
  - If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
- If you don't get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.
- Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness for 14 days, whether you get tested or not.

Mrs. Buell stated it is a guidance/direction, not an executive order. She stated that state officials are looking at this as well as school officials. Mrs. Buell stated that it becomes a difficult situation for the school district. She stated as a school district, they can set some guidance stating that we are going to follow the recommendation from the state and follow the CDC guidelines.

Mrs. Jolley states it is a tough call on both ends, given the past year it has been difficult and we have been forced to not deal with it. For example, if all your family is on the west coast and you lose family members and have the chance to go and do that and now that restrictions have been lifted you decide to go and now the school is saying stop. She believes that the Board should put something out there and do it quickly. Think about it and put something out soon.

Dr. Perkins-Banas stated that she thinks it makes sense to inform families of the current CDC guidelines, people may not know and getting information out prior to April break would be important.

Mrs. Lyons believes something needs to be in place for the April vacation as well.

Mrs Buell stated she can communicate that the Brooklyn School District is following the CDC guidance, when families travel over April vacation or even on a weekend, then they need to get a negative test and quarantine for 7 days or not test and quarantine for 10 days. Numbers have gone up in the past 3 weeks, Brooklyn is still in the red. Teachers are considered essential employees and may not apply to employees. Mrs. Buell stated she will speak with the medical advisor, who does recommend the CDC guidance.

Mrs. Jolley asked if following this guideline, is it only students who are impacted at quarantine, not the same as teachers? Mrs. Buell stated that is correct. Mrs. Jolley stated that they will both have the same exposure risk, but not being held to the same standards because teachers are essential employees. She asked if teachers will have to have a negative test result?

Mrs. Lyons stated that by the time of April vacation, teachers will be two weeks post vaccination. Mrs. Buell stated that is correct.

Mrs. Jolley stated that the vaccination does not stop you from carrying it to someone who is not vaccinated because children are not. Mrs. Buell stated that even if you are vaccinated, we should still be wearing our masks and following all mitigation strategies. Mrs. Buell stated she will speak to the medical advisor and will share information with the Board and the community soon.

## 9. New Business

### a. Annual Healthy Food Certification Statement for School Year 2021-2022

Motion to approve the healthy food option: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted for the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups. (Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Motion to approve the combined food and beverage exemptions: The Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the

food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

b. Funding Sources for 2021-2022

Mrs. Buell stated that ESSER II Funds the Brooklyn School district will be receiving is \$798,000 and the American Rescue Plan Funds of \$1,507,000. The intent of the law is to support the unfinished learning of our students due to COVID. Based on needs assessment indicates the following six priority areas:

- Curriculum, Assessment to Address Learning Loss (Mandated 20% of American Rescue Plan Funds)
- Instructional Coaching and Intervention
- SRBI and Data Analysis
- Social Emotional Learning
- Technology and Online Learning
- Public Health Protocols
- Local Offset

c. TiCoat Approvals

Mrs. Buell stated that the TiCoat is receiving their green seal for the application of the product, which will support healthier schools and less cleaning costs and the ability to sanitize. Mrs. Buell stated that they plan to use American Rescue Plan Funds to apply the sealant to support healthier schools.

d. First Read: Policy 5141-213

Mrs. Buell shared Policy 5141-213, which is the policy for Administering Medications, for the Board to review.

e. Solar Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Mrs. Buell stated that the Solar Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will be held on Tuesday, April 27th, 2021. She stated that both buildings have gone live and would like everyone to know that the Town of Brooklyn owns the solar panels and will benefit from the savings and will offset energy we produce at the schools. The Town of Brooklyn will receive renewable energy credits and will have a revenue source for the next 14 years.

f. Last Day of School:



Mrs. Buell stated that the last day of school is anticipated to be June 11, 2021. Mrs. Buell would like to propose 8th grade promotion to be held on Thursday, June 10, 2021. Due to the executive order, districts were permitted to convert up to 5 days at the beginning of the school year for professional development to prepare for the necessary COVID protocols. Brooklyn used three days for professional development. Students will have 179 days of school, if approved by the Board of Education, we would celebrate the last day of school, and promotion for 8th graders on Thursday, June 10, 2021 with outdoor celebrations similar to last year.

Motion to approve the proposed 8th grade promotion to be held on Thursday June 10, 2021.

(Jolley/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

#### 10. Public Comment

Mr. Otto stated that the 51 condo development to the rear of the school where the access is on Louise Berry Drive is likely to be approved. He believes it is time for the Board to make some decisions on the schools access to the buildings without Louise Berry Drive being busy and blocking families from getting home.

Mrs. Lyons believes that there is a system in place. Mrs. Buell stated that there have been issues in the past, but believes it has been addressed. Parents do leave on Louise Berry Drive after drop-off and pick-up, but no longer stop. She doesn't believe it will be an issue. She is open to ideas. Mr Otto said the last time he observed dismissal, Louise Berry Drive had heavy traffic and he did state that he hasn't observed in a while.

#### 11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:47 p.m.

(Phaiah/Perkins-Banas)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

*Donna L. DiBenedetto*

Donna L. DiBenedetto  
Board Clerk