

# 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  
Carolyn Hackbarth

**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 its regular monthly meeting on January 29, 2020 in the Central Office Community Room. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Atchinson, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Jolley, and Mrs. Hackbarth. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, and Mr. Otto, Board of Finance, were in attendance. Parents, students and members of the public were in the audience.

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

Quorum established. Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

None

4. Approval of minutes

a. December 17, 2019 BOE Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2019

Mr. Phaiah stated a correction needs to be made to the previous BOE Meeting Minutes to show that Mrs. Hackbarth abstained from approving the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 27, 2019 due to her not being at that meeting. (Jolley/Perkins-Banas)

No further Discussion, unanimous vote to approve.

Motion to move agenda item #6 Brooklyn's Best to item #5 Correspondence and

Communication.  
(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)  
No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

6. Brooklyn's Best

**CAPSS SUPERINTENDENTS AWARD WINNERS**

1. BES Makenna Faucher, Lucas Hecker
2. BMS Ella Gisleson, Devin Exarhoulias
3. WA: Linda St. Laurent

Mrs. Buell wanted to recognize Brooklyn students and introduce the 2 students in attendance tonight, Makenna Faucher and Ella Gisleson. She read what the fourth grade team had to say about Makenna. Mrs. Buell also read what the eight grade team had to say about Ella. Mrs. Buell took a photo of the students with the Board.

**BES**

1. Laura Gatlin has returned.
2. Mrs. Mango, Mr. Moriarty, Ms. Craig, Mrs. Sokolowski, and Ms. Nicholuson have all passed a TEAM module.
3. 4th grade caroling at the senior center was well received. Our students received high compliments.
4. Some kindergarten classes have begun taking books to read at home from their classroom libraries. Teachers are so proud of all the growth the children have made.
5. Ms. Phelps passed a TEAM Module.
6. The Ice Box made a donation of three \$10 certificates for invention convention winners.

**BMS**

1. December Good Cookie Award Recipients:  
Gr. 5- Edward Purcell, Aris Roane  
Gr. 6- Benjamin Arters, Colby Gisleson  
Gr. 7- Georgia Lucachie, Jackson Sorel  
Gr. 8- Darin Exarhoulias, Emma Seide
2. Grade 8 Field Trip is planned for May 26-28, 2020 to Washington, D.C.

5. Correspondence and Communication

- a. Retirement Letter

Mrs. Buell stated that Pamela Abel will be retiring as special education teacher after 26 years of service. We thank her for her service and wish her well in her retirement.

b. Thank you letters

A thank you note was sent out to Ms. Turakhia for 'India Unveiled' and 'Finders Keepers' book donations that will be shared in our school libraries for students to learn about various cultures.

Mrs. Buell stated that Brooklyn Xtra Mart gave a generous \$500 grant to be used towards support of instruction in the areas of math and/or science. This grant would benefit our STEAM programs in both schools.

A thank you was sent to Beagary Charitable Trust for their very generous donation of \$12,500 to be used for the Brooklyn's Teacher's Wish List.

A thank you was sent to QuedN Management Group for the 'Beautifully Bald' book donation. The book will be shared in the school libraries to teach children to embrace differences in themselves as well as others.

c. Correspondence from Woodstock Academy Head of School

Mrs. Buell stated that she received several recognition letters from Mr. Sanford at Woodstock Academy for Brooklyn students:

Harriet Majek, January Head of School's Award  
Isabella Precourt, January Head of School's Award  
Caroline Frost, November Head of School's Award  
Linda St. Laurent, November Head of School's Award.

Mr. Sanford also sent a thank you note for Brooklyn Schools hosting the CAPSS Awards here at the Brooklyn Middle School.

6. Administrative Reports

a. Finance Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the budget to date. Expenses to date are \$8,486,885.74 or 54.6% of the budget.

b. NFA Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the annual report she received from NFA. She also stated that next school year, NFA will no longer provide transportation for Brooklyn students that attend NFA. In the past, there was an agreement where other districts would transport Brooklyn students to NFA. Mrs. Buell isn't sure if this will be an option for Brooklyn students.

c. 2020-2021 Final copy of Calendar

The final copy of the approved 2020-2021 school calendar is available.

d. Future designated high school presentation dates

- i. March 25, 2020 - Woodstock Academy
- ii. April 22, 2020 - Killingly High School
- iii. Would you like to hear presentations from Putnam High School or Parish Hill?

The BOE would like to hear from H. H. Ellis Technical High School. There was discussion of having Plainfield High School present to the students or having other designated high schools. It would also add more transportation costs if we designate more high schools.

e. Enrollment Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the enrollment report

f. SERAC Grant

Mrs. Buell stated that we applied and received a SERAC Grant to create a Wellness Fair. Together BES and BMS are offering a wellness fair to be held on 3/26/2020 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. at BMS.

g. Field Trip - May 26-28, 2020 to Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Buell stated that the goal is to have 80% of the 8th grade students to participate for the trip to occur. She also stated that we have a donor to help cover the costs for students.

7. Board of Education Committee Reports

a. Budget Update

The budget meeting was held just prior to the BOE Meeting tonight. Mrs. Lyons stated we have some high numbers and will be working to get them down.

8. Board Representatives to Other Committees

Mr. Phaiyah went to the last Killingly High School BOE Meeting. He met Superintendent, Steve Rioux, and was introduced to 4 out of the 5 BOE members. Mr. Phaiyah mentioned he left during public comment, where the meeting was going past midnight. Killingly is starting to work on their budget as well.

Mr. Atchinson went to the last Woodstock Board of Trustees Meeting and was officially accepted onto the Woodstock Board of Trustees.

Mrs. Perkins-Banas stated the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation met on January 13, 2020. There was a sub-committee established to do their budget. They are planning on hiring a special educator in the summer. There's also a need for a maintenance person.

9. Old Business

a. Transportation Committee Recommendation

Mrs. Lyons stated that she reviewed the bids with Mrs. Buell and they decided to go with EASTCONN's bid due to EASTCONN having better numbers. She stated it's their recommendation that they go with EASTCONN. Mrs. Buell discussed the bids from the bus companies. She stated that Brooklyn Public Schools went out to bid with Eastford Public Schools, which allowed bus contractors to bid on one, both or both individually. Four companies gave bids:

- \* Datco submitted a bid on Eastford only
- \* EASTCONN submitted a bid on both Brooklyn and Eastford together and separate
- \* First Student submitted a bid on both Brooklyn and Eastford together and separate
- \* M&J submitted a bid on both Brooklyn and Eastford together and separate

Motion to provisionally approve the 5 year bus contract to EASTCONN pending clarification from vendors.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

b. PV Projects Update

Mrs. Lyons stated that the Solar committee met at 5:00 p.m. today and they did approve a company to move forward with the solar project.

Mrs. Buell stated that the building committee wanted her to recommend to the full Board that they act and approve an appointment of Horton Electrical Services LLC.

Mrs. Buell suggested a motion that the full Board approve the appointment of Horton Electrical Services LLC to be awarded the bid for solar project DAS Project ID 019-0032PV for the Middle school.

(Hackbarth/Perkins-Banas)

Mr. Atchinson had a question about the bid from CTEC Solar. Mrs. Buell stated CTEC cost more.

No further discussion, unanimous vote to approve.

Motion to amend the previous motion to add “and to forward the contract directly to the town’s attorney for review.”

(Perkins-Banas/Atchinson)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

First Motion Amended: Motion that the full Board approve the appointment of Horton Electrical Services LLC to be awarded the bid for solar project DAS Project ID 019-0032PV for the Middle School and to forward the contract directly to the town’s attorney for review.

(Hackbarth/Perkins-Banas)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve.

Second Motion: Motion that the full Board approve the appointment of Horton Electrical Services LLC to be awarded the bid for solar project DAS Project ID 019-0031PV for the Elementary School and to forward the contract directly to the town’s attorney for review.

(Perkins-Banas/Hackbarth)

No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

## 10. New Business

### a. Board of Education Retreat

Mrs. Buell stated that they have discussed conducting a retreat for the Board of Education. This will include the board working together to learn about how to maximize the work of the Board. Mrs. Buell recommended Dr. Mary Conway facilitate the retreat and stated she is interested in facilitating the retreat.

Location: Board Room

Time: 6:30-8:30 PM

Meeting: February, March, April

Possible Dates: February 19, 2020 and April 1, 2020

Mrs. Buell will see if Dr. Mary Conway is available for the possible dates.

Mr. Atchinson wanted to review the emergency communication plan in regards to the threat that was made a few weeks ago by a student. With there being new Board members, what the protocol would be and how parents are notified. He was notified by a few parents that they didn’t receive the school messenger and wanted clarification on how the messages are sent out. Mrs. Buell stated that parents set up how they receive messages: text message, phone call, email. Mrs. Buell stated her protocol is to address the issue first and then to communicate the issue to staff and parents. Mrs. Buell posts on the school website, facebook, and school messenger. Mrs. Buell will reach out to families about resetting their

preferences if they weren't receiving the messages the way they want to receive it and mention the school app.

## 11. Public Comment

A volunteer in the Brooklyn Elementary School Library wanted to know if there was any talk about the position of the librarians. She wanted to state her concerns in regards to the library media positions. She volunteers with Mrs. Therrien and is concerned Mrs. Therrien's position is going to be filled by someone fresh out of college. She feels that someone out of college is not going to be able to fill her shoes, teach students all the things Mrs. Therrien does. She mentioned that Mrs. Therrien teach students manners, how to use the library, how to respect the books and each other, learning how to use the computers, things they can use throughout their lives. She knows the children and can help them choose books they like on their reading level. Her job is very important.

Mr. Otto wanted to comment as well. He stated that this has been tried before and had to be changed back. He feels certified teachers should be serving as librarians not paraprofessionals. If you open it up to paraprofessionals, how are the jobs going to be filled? Will there be a bidding process based on seniority?

Stacy Auclair, a current bus driver for Brooklyn, spoke about some bus issues on why EASTCONN came in so well, Brooklyn will lose taxes. EASTCONN isn't going to pay town taxes. Has anyone checked on their maintenance facility? Where is their maintenance facility for the buses? They don't have a maintenance facility to fit a bus in. They have one mechanic. Right now with M&J, they start the buses at approximately 5:00, if a bus doesn't start the mechanic is there by 5:30. What's going to happen with the new company that has one mechanic? She asked if their union contract would be accepted? Drivers have been there several years. Starting with a new bus company comes with them wanting to do it their way and things don't run as smoothly. The lowest bid, you get what you pay for. The lowest bid doesn't always end up the lowest when special education and mid-day runs aren't added in. You're going to lose your tax revenue for property taxes on the buses, M&J are paying now and First Student was paying when they were here. Does EASTCONN already have the buses? The buses come from out west and they aren't Connecticut approved. Connecticut has different regulations to get approved.

Melissa Robbins, a current bus driver for Brooklyn, asked about the bidding with the special education runs. Are those additional runs or runs we aren't doing currently? You shouldn't be paying an additional fee for students already on a bus that are being paid for. EASTCONN isn't an experienced bus transportation for students, they are just getting into bus transportation. They transport by vans. First Student may cost a little more, but you'll get a lot more for your money. M&J doesn't offer paid training, that's why they're short drivers. First Student takes care of their drivers and training. They care about safety. Drivers have left M&J and have gone to EASTCONN and were promised hours and they aren't getting the hours. Majority of the drivers are on unemployment during the summer.

EASTCONN will not pay unemployment costs for drivers to do that, non-profit organization. It puts the drivers into a predicament.

12. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:57 p.m.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

*Donna L. DiBenedetto*

Donna L. DiBenedetto

Board Clerk