

The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn
119 Gorman Road
Brooklyn, CT 06234

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 their monthly meeting virtually on August 26, 2020 via Zoom. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Atchinson, Mr. Phaiah, and Mrs. Jolley. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, and Mr. Otto, Board of Finance, were also present.

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 prior to the meeting.

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

Quorum established. Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

2. Public Comment

Mrs. Buell stated that she hadn't received emails for questions and comments.

3. Approval of minutes

a. July 2020 BOE Meeting Minutes in two parts

Motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of July 22, 2020
(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)
No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of July 29, 2020

(Phaiah/Perkins-Banas)

No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve.

4. Correspondence and Communication

- a. Request for the Board of Education to accept a tuition paying student into 8th grade

Mrs. Buell stated that a family has moved to another district and is asking to pay tuition to keep their child in 8th grade that has been a part of the Brooklyn Public Schools system since preschool and the family has been a great part of the community. The parent had previously asked at an in-person Board meeting. They would like to request the Board accept this student on a tuition basis to finish 8th grade in Brooklyn. The parent is proposing a \$4,000 a year tuition basis. Mrs. Buell stated that the Board will need to make a decision on whether they will accept this student at what the parent proposed at the \$4,000 tuition rate.

Mr. Atchinson asked where the \$4,000 figure was arrived at? Mrs. Buell stated that the per pupil expenditure is \$15,500. Mrs. Buell stated she explained this to the family and they believe that is out of their range and would like their child to continue through the Brooklyn Public Schools. On behalf of their child, they proposed the \$4,000 offer.

Mrs. Lyons asked what grade level? The student will be in 8th grade and has been in the Brooklyn Public School system since preschool. Mrs. Lyons asked if it's just for one year? Mrs. Buell stated yes. There was discussion of setting a precedent and setting a substantial reduction in tuition. Mrs. Buell stated that one of the concerns for the family is the circumstances in the spring and how the school year ended with the trauma of how school is starting this year. There was discussion of difference in per pupil expenditure and the proposed lower tuition rate offered. If most schools are doing remote learning, it would be the same regardless of who's giving the assignments.

A motion was made by Mrs. Perkins-Banas to deny the request to the Board of Education to permit the family to pay tuition for the student.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

Mr. Atchinson asked if he could ask a question before going to vote. He asked with the \$15,000 tuition on a normal year, is there a cost savings due to the hybrid model? Mrs. Buell stated there isn't a cost savings, there's still additional expenditures with servicing students in and out of school.

Mrs. Lyons stated there's a motion on the table, any further discussion?

No further discussion, Mr. Atchinson opposed.

Motion carries with regret to deny the request.

- b. Request for leave of absence by employee

Mrs. Buell stated that an employee requested an unpaid leave of absence this afternoon. She stated they had discussed this on Monday and Mrs. Buell asked that the employee provide something in writing to outline what the request was. The employee asked that Mrs. Buell please report that there is a medical issue and is unable to return to work. According to the 1303 contract. Mrs. Buell is able to grant five days leave of absence. The employee is unclear as to when she might be able to return to work. Mrs. Buell stated that she gave the employee the five days leave of absence in order to give the employee time to request a leave. Mrs. Buell stated this is an employee that is unable to telework, is not eligible for a medical leave under FMLA and to hire a part time replacement would be very difficult to secure a high quality employee to replace them and learn the job.

Mrs. Buell recommends a motion that the Board of Education deny the leave of absence based on the nature of the job. It is important to hire and train a replacement.

Mrs. Perkins-Banas asked to clarify. There is no medical disorder, FMLA, or other provisions to hold her job unpaid? Mrs. Buell said that is correct.

Motion to deny the unpaid leave of absence request.
(Phaiah/Perkins-Banas)
No discussion, Jolley abstained

- Mrs. Buell added a few resignations, retirement and new staff to the agenda item.
- c. Resignation: Mrs. Therrien, former BES Library Media Specialist
Mrs. Castro, former Director of HR/Administrative Secretary

Mrs. Buell stated that Mrs. Therrien took a librarian position in another district and she wishes her well and thanks her for her service here at the Brooklyn Schools.

Mrs. Buell stated Mrs. Castro resigned her position as Director of HR/Administrative Secretary and she wishes her well.

Retirement: Mrs. Donna Backhaus retired

Mrs. Buell stated that Mrs. Backhaus who was a .8 math interventionist at the middle school retired. Mrs. Buell stated that they are going to bring her back out of retirement in a part-time capacity as a math interventionist. Mrs. Buell stated she's glad to have her back.

New Staff: Ms. McAvoy (Grade 2), Ms. Cronin (Grade 3), Ms. Webster (Special Education), Ms. Caron (Distance Learning Teacher), Mr. O'Rourke (Special Education), Ms. Moreau (Grade 3), Mr. Baccaro (School Counselor at BMS), Ms. Russo (Grade 7 Science Teacher), Ms. Barry (Special Education Teacher), Ms. Card

(Special Education Teacher), Ms. Lowe (Grade 6 Writing), Mr. Carson (Grade 5 Math and Science), Ms. Barrette (BES Nurse)

Mrs. Buell stated she did receive a letter of retirement from Mary Brennan, School Nurse at the elementary school, and thanks her for her service.

5. Administrative Reports

a. Brooklyn BOE Expenditure Report

Mrs. Buell stated the expenditure report can be seen on Facebook. She stated it's still early in the year to state whether or not we are on track. There were a few positions added and she has requested funding from the state and found out the personnel part of the expenditures will not be covered. She stated the salary line item is currently approximately \$112,000 over spent. They will monitor what is spent over the next 9 months to balance for the end of the year.

Mr. Otto wanted to object to the fact that the documents are not made part of the agenda. He stated they need to be part of the agenda if they are going to be discussed. He stated that a citizen of Brooklyn that doesn't have access to Facebook can't see these documents and he is one of them.

b. Enrollment Report/Staffing Model

Mrs. Buell discussed the enrollment report and stated that we are in a hybrid model of A days and B days and one day of all distance learning. Currently, at the Brooklyn Elementary School, there are 377 students that will be in person, 127 students that are opt-out distance learning and 26 students that are being homeschooled. At the Brooklyn Middle School, there are 271 students that are in person, 68 students that are opt-out distance learning and 5 students that are homeschooled. There are a total of 195 students that are opt-out distance learning and 31 students being homeschooled. Mrs. Buell stated that she doesn't have access to the high schools' database to see how many are distance learning or homeschooled. Mrs. Buell stated that families can request to change. After a couple weeks of school, they may say they want their child/children to return to school. Mrs. Buell would like to see a restriction on changing. She stated that they need to focus on opening school and not changing classes everyday.

Mr. Otto stated that this document isn't part of the agenda and unavailable to any citizen of the town that wants to participate or observe the meeting. He is requesting that moving forward that any document being discussed in a meeting, is part of the agenda and goes out prior to the meeting. Mr. Otto stated that he appreciated the difficulty in staffing the schools under these circumstances where parents have the option to enroll or not enroll and can choose to change their mind. He stated with the significant reduction in number of students, the school

will have to teach and to him, it requires the Board of Education to take a look at the need to retain the number of employees they have. He's not requesting they terminate people, but to consider the actual enrollment with the number of people being employed for this school year.

Mrs. Perkins-Banas asked the students that are enrolled in distance learning, are they still enrolled in school and require instruction? Mrs. Buell stated that is correct. There are several staff members in each school that are working with those students on a daily basis that are full distance learning. Related Arts teachers are also working with the hybrid students that are at home during their distance learning days. It is a complex schedule and we are still educating the students everyday.

c. Reopening of Schools

i. Opening under the hybrid model AA remote BB

Mrs. Buell wanted to restate that we are operating on a hybrid model. Teachers have been contacting parents to communicate about the hybrid, what section their child is in, and to address questions that may arise.

ii. No fall sports

Mrs. Buell stated that cross country and soccer are both difficult sports to maintain social distance. Mrs. Buell stated the focus is on education and supporting a healthy education.

iii. No outside organizations using the facilities

Mrs. Buell stated that no outside organizations entering the building, with the exception of the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation running the before and after school program. Mrs. Buell stated that she is in collaboration with the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation creating a childcare option for families that their children are not in school. There are still some vacancies for anyone who is interested. Brooklyn Public Schools is trying to limit outside contact including sports and other activities inside the building. Custodial staff have a different schedule.

iv. Collaboration with Parks and Recreation for:

1. Before/After School Care
2. 8:30-9:15 free drop-off program 4 days/week
3. Childcare 9:15-3:15 M-F

Mrs. Buell stated that the instructional day is 9:15-3:15. There is a free

drop-off program from 8:30-9:15, but parents must sign-up through the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation. She stated that students can't just show-up, they need to know that they are coming. Brooklyn Parks and Recreation is helping in creating it and Mrs. Buell is helping with staffing it. If something should happen, they need to know who is attending for contacting purposes.

Mrs. Buell stated that she is requesting to pause on making changes to assignments until September 14, 2020. There have been many requests and adjustments made on a daily basis adjusting schedules as class sizes increase. There was discussion with Board members that parents have had plenty of time to decide.

Mrs. Jolley asked based on the scenario of being a public school and having to provide the schooling in this situation, is it okay to do that or do we have a responsibility to allow students to return to school if they choose to? Mrs. Buell stated that the State Department of Education has provided some flexibility on this, we have to allow changes. Mr. Phaiiah added that if parents are committed to distance learning and want to have their child return to school in 2 days, we need more time to do that to add to a cohort. Mrs. Buell would just like to set some reasonable guidelines.

v. Slightly modified bus routes and parent drop-off/pick-up

Mrs. Buell explained the parent drop-off/pick-up routes and stated that it was shared with parents and shared the map with the Board. The adjustment is to separate students going through the same door. Mrs. Buell explained the parent drop-off route. There will be many staff members to help direct students and help maintain social distance. Mrs. Buell stated buses will drop off at the elementary school circle. Parents/cars will not be allowed in that area from 9:00-10:00am or from 3:00-4:00pm. Many staff will be out on the sidewalk to help direct middle school students to the area they enter for their grade level and to help maintain social distance entering the building. Mrs. Buell also explained the pick-up adjustments. Mrs. Buell encourages parents to look at the maps posted on the school's website for parent drop-off and pick-up routes.

Mrs. Jolley asked if preschool students and kindergarteners are entering through the same door and preschoolers do not have to wear masks, they will be exposed to kindergarteners? Mrs. Buell stated that preschool students are now required to wear masks. Everyone is to be wearing a mask.

Mrs. Jolley asked if you don't sign-up for the free drop-off program, what

is the parent drop-off time and pick-up time? Mrs. Buell stated the drop off is 9:15-9:30am. and pick-up is 3:15pm.

d. Devices to be distributed: Chromebooks, iMacs and hotspots

Mrs. Buell stated that there was a shipment of devices this summer, but we still have a shortage of devices. Some students will be receiving desktops, iMacs, for full distance learning. Distribution of devices are tomorrow 12:30-3:00 at both schools for distance learning and cohort B.

e. 2020-2021 School Calendar

Mrs. Buell shared the modified calendar that is also posted on the schools website and shows the A days (shaded green) typically Mondays and Tuesdays, B days (shaded blue) typically Thursdays and Fridays, and Remote days (shaded red) where all students will work with their teachers together distance learning. Mrs. Buell stated that she will continue to monitor and make changes as needed.

Mrs. Jolley asked how will meal distribution be handled for the home day or remote day? Mrs. Buell stated families will be able to pick up meals for students that are on a home day or full opt-out distance learning, still working on the schedule with Heather Plourde from EASTCONN. Meals are at the school prices: if eligible for free, reduced or full priced meals. A waiver hasn't come through at this time.

6. Board of Education Committee Reports

Mrs. Perkins-Banas stated that the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation canceled due to the Tropical Storm Isaias.

7. Board Representatives to Other Committees

Mr. Atchinson was at the Woodstock Board of Trustees annual meeting last week. They will be starting next week with full distance learning four days a week with Wednesday being an optional day to go in for lab work or other activities. They are hoping by second semester to be back full time.

Mrs. Buell stated that the school readiness grant we are still eligible for even with some changes. It is based on the program not on the enrollment and will be issuing the same amount of funding. Mrs. Buell stated that the paperwork has been completed and submitted the hybrid model to the school readiness counsel and then it will be submitted to the state.

8. Old Business

a. PV Project Update

Mrs. Buell stated that solar panels have been going up on the roof today and posted pictures to the schools facebook page. A transformer needed to be modified to handle the production at the elementary school.

b. Change in minimum wage

- i. Minimum wage will increase from \$11/hr to \$12/hour on September 1, 2020. Currently we pay substitute paraprofessionals minimum wage. Non-certified substitutes make \$12.14/hr (\$85 a day), and certified substitutes make \$13.57 (\$95 a day). During 2020-21 sub paras will work 6 hours and make \$60/day. Next year we would need to adjust this rate. No motion at this time. We will not be using many subs due to cohorting of students.

c. Insurance Policy for Chromebooks

Mrs. Buell mentioned at the last meeting July 29, 2020 to offset accidental damage to chromebooks. She would like the Board to consider requesting a \$20 fee for each chromebook, to be assessed toward the purchase of the chromebook.

There was discussion on what would be considered accidental and intentional and if there would be more fees if the damage was intentional.

Motion to approve a \$20 annual fee to be assessed to students who choose to use a district issued chromebook in the event that there is accidental damage. This fee would be held in an account by the BOE and used to offset the cost of repairs. If a student has no repair costs, they may choose to purchase the device at the end of four years for \$150 (or assessed rate) minus any fees paid during the four years of middle school. If a student has had repairs, the full cost of the device will be adjusted by the cost of repairs.

(Perkins-Banas/Jolley)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

9. New Business

a. ESSER/CARES Act Funding:

Mrs. Buell stated that Brooklyn Public Schools is receiving funds to cover the cost of smartboards, hotspots, SEL curriculum resources and assessment tools, and a change of Medical Advisor which was in increased cost

b. Additional Funding from State:

- i. Personnel Related services: Cleaning/PPE services \$2,400
- ii. Non-Personnel Related Costs: Transportation \$146,000* changed today
PPE \$5,000

Mrs. Buell stated that she initially requested \$1.7 million, which included for additional staffing, cleaning supplies, busing, PPE's from the state and Brooklyn Schools will be receiving approximately \$140,000 up from \$46,000. Mrs. Buell stated that we are receiving funds for cleaning, PPE, and transportation, which she heard about today.

- c. We will also receive 20 chromebook devices through the State based upon a request Mrs. Buell made and another 44 she has on order and hopefully will be in by October or November.

10. Public Comment

Mrs. Buell stated that she received two emails.

Michelle Parameter wanted to express her disappointment with the district on the decision to deny the request for a student to attend Brooklyn Middle School. She stated she understands that they are no longer living in the district, but the family has provided the community with many memories and the mom has been influential with the PTO, and the student is exceptional. She also stated that their involvement will continue despite the location where they reside. Mrs. Parameter urges the Board to reconsider.

Amy Landis stated that the schedule you have shared by an email from the school that drop-off to the school would be 9:15, which means TAG does not begin until later. The actual time of drop-off and the time students need to be in their classrooms needs to be communicated to parents. Additionally, what are the metrics to bring the students back five days a week?

Mrs. Buell stated that she hasn't received any other comments and asked Mr. Atchinson if he has any that he can see? Mr. Atchinson stated that there is a public comment in the Chat.

Tarek Sallum stated thanks to the Board. He knows it's a tough job and appreciates them for putting in the time doing all that they do. Mr. Sallum asked how many requests do you get per year for students to attend by tuition? Mrs. Buell stated that public comment is intended for the Board to hear public comments from the public not a question and answer session. She stated she can receive the questions and respond to the questions if the Board directs her to do so. Mrs. Buell asked for his next question? He stated that he would go into a commentary mode. If the state has provided the school funding based on the student headcount from last year, then you would have the funding allocated for that

student on that head count. If the student moves and the budget is unallocated, then BMS loses that amount. If this student is still allocated for even though they moved, then you would have a surplus due to that student not taking up resources. Mr. Sallum continued that logic would be that the additional amount of funding would be beneficial. The surplus could go towards covid related costs. If income to revenue is taken away, it would be a case to get revenue. Mr. Sallum stated if the student doesn't take up additional resources (food, bus, special education), where would that student take up \$15,000 for what the tuition is set at? Any differential in income should help not deter. If we aren't in a budget surplus situation, then the precedent you're talking about setting would be several fold. One, the precedent you'll be setting is they don't make more money. Second, to engage in a case by case basis of x number of requests to attend by tuition. Third, if you don't take this into consideration, it would encourage false information in terms of residency status to gain access to your schools. If a family is willing to offer what they can afford to send their child to school, it'll offset costs. It isn't about a generalization, every student is important, worthy of getting their particular case heard. Mr. Sallum asks that the Board reconsider and think about the school, not the student, or the fiscal situation that can be enhanced by allowing a student, that's headcount has or hasn't been factored in, based on what they take from you in the system. Will the Board reconsider and take into advisement based on this logic?

Mr. Atchinson thanked Mr. Sallum and wanted to state he voted against the motion to deny due to he feels he doesn't have enough information. Mr. Atchinson stated he doesn't understand the cost for the student or where the \$15,000 comes from and if there is a reduction in costs from a hybrid model. Mr. Atchinson feels there isn't enough information for him to make a decision. It would be great to see more detail to make a better decision.

Mr. Sallum asked if he would get an answer to the question.

Mr. Atchinson asked if the Board was going to answer the question or can we at least state how we will be answering. Mr. Atchinson asked if Mrs. Buell would email him back or are we saying the decision is final? Mrs. Lyons stated that the Board will discuss this with the Superintendent and direct her to respond appropriately.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:41 p.m.

(Jolley/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna L. DiBenedetto

Donna L. DiBenedetto

Board Clerk