

**BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION
AGENDA OF IN-PERSON SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2026 - 7:00 PM
CITY HALL ROOM 305
45 LYON TERRACE
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604**

1. **Public Speaking**
2. **Approval of the Minutes – Regular Meeting June 8, 2026**
3. **End of Year Evaluation Presentation by Interim Superintendent, Dr. Royce Avery**
4. ***Review and Possible Amendments of the Proposed Memorandum of Agreement Between the Connecticut State Board of Education on Behalf of the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Bridgeport Board of Education on Behalf of Bridgeport Public School District; and Authorization for the Chairperson to Execute the Memorandum of Agreement in Final Form as Approved.**
5. **Review and Possible Amendments of the Proposed Agreement Between the ZEAL Education Group and the Bridgeport Board of Education; and Authorization for the Chairperson to Execute the Agreement in Final Form as Approved.**
6. **Adjourn**

Monday, June 8, 2026

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held June 8, 2026, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science and Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Present were Chair Jennifer Perez, Vice Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Secretary Maritza Estremera Jimenez, Albert Benejan Grajales, Willie Medina, Jowanne Burks-Jennings*, Lamond Daniels*, and Robert Traber. Andre Woodson* joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

*Remote participation

Interim Supt. Royce Avery was present.

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:

Christian Bica of Central High School reported. Among the items he highlighted were the outstanding college acceptance season; Chrome Book turn-ins and preparation for final examinations; the successful senior prom; and the June 18th graduation. He thanked the board, the administration, and Central High for their support during his time serving as a student representative. He added that he will be attending Fairfield University on a scholarship.

Rebecca Bristhole of Harding High highlighted the presentation of Capstone projects; a health fair; a field day and a fundraiser organized by the senior class. She thanked the board and said she would be attending Fairfield University on a scholarship.

Shannoy Fraser of Harding High thanked the board for the opportunity to serve as a student representative. She said she will be attending Wesleyan University on a scholarship.

Deborah Graziano Silva of Bridgeport Military Academy highlighted uniform collection; course selection for next year; a Rotary Club scholarship; a recognition of Ms. Arroyo; the awards ceremony; and the company competition. Kishawanie Allen described special days held at the school. She said the superintendent met with students to explain the transition to the Fairchild Wheeler campus while the new school is being constructed.

Mr. Woodson* joined the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Kelsey Defriesse, a student at the Aerospace School at Fairchild Wheeler, said notification of the move of Bridgeport Military Academy (BMA) was only given on May 28th. She described the meeting with Dr. Avery for 300 students, which she described as a lecture. She said Dr. Avery only took one question and then refused to take any

further question. She said Ms. Russell Tucker, the commissioner of the state Department of Education, should also listen.

James Stanton distributed a document with questions to board members about the moving of Bridgeport Military Academy. Dr. Avery said questions could be answered via the district's website. Mr. Stanton posed questions orally about the move of BMA to Fairchild Wheeler and said he hoped they would be answered.

Steve Nelson said he was speaking with community concerns as a retired school police veteran and a grandparent. He said transparency and respect for one another was needed. He said he supported the principal of Hooker School one hundred percent. He described the importance of local community schools.

Angelica Mercer said this was the first board meeting she has attended. As an employee and a parent, she wanted to know why parents at Thomas Hooker were not notified that a staff member was being investigated for serious allegations involving a student and a staff member. She said she reported a sexual assault, and she said she had done more than her job. She asked how a video game was present in a classroom and said she was worried about her child in another school.

Emma Alamo described the grant that led to Bridgeport Military Academy being displaced from Fairchild Wheeler within one year. She described the success of former students who have moved on to employment and military service. She said Fairchild Wheeler was the home of BMA, and the students should not be made to feel unwelcome.

Albert Benejan Grajales said when he decided to run for the board, the students and parents were his priority. He said he had three boys who went to district schools. He urged Dr. Avery to have another meeting with parents, students, and staff to answer more questions. He said we're here to do the best for Bridgeport Public Schools. He said our priority was to listen to the public. He urged not listening to people who talk negative stuff from outside.

CHAIR REPORT:

Ms. Perez recognized student representatives who are here tonight. She said a lot of the reps have been a big part of the advocacy efforts with the state and the city. She honored Christian Bica, Adrian Holloway, Shannoy Fraser, Rebecca Bristhole, Bryan Almedia Teo, Raquel Paulo, Naijalee Roman, Alexis Cunningham, Shanoy Clarke, Deborah Graciano Braga Silva, Kishawnie Allen, Ashley Beckford, Omar Rayyashi, Daniela Gomez, Anooj Bhave, Jeronimo Restrepo Munoz, and Anika Fazal.

Ron Rapice recognized the student poet laureate, Gabriel Cooke, a current sophomore at Central Magnet, who was chosen out of a pool of 17 writers.

Ms. Cooke said students needed be supported as the next generation that the community needs. She read a poem entitled "Our Future."

Ms. Perez said the board voted on a superintendent student search to begin a search for a permanent superintendent. The Department of Education will be covering the costs for the search firm. The search will begin when we sign the contract. She said the board approved all the 2000 and 3000 series policies over the course of the year. Additional policies will be reviewed going forward.

Ms. Perez thanked the staff members who have supported the board this year. She said there would be upcoming special meetings related to Dr. Avery.

Mr. Sokolovic requested there be community meetings with the BMA/Fairchild Wheeler communities because of the perception they were neglected in the conversation. He said the elected board should take the lead on the matter with the superintendent answering questions.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Ms. Perez said the Operations Committee met last week and the bulk of tonight's agenda came from that meeting,

including solar panels, the budget, and the ed specification for the new specialized school at the Skane campus.

Mr. Sokolovic referred a quarterly report on the budget, beginning at the first meeting of the next school year.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Policy Committee should meet over the summer to examine the series that should be looked at.

Ms. Perez said there would be a new ad hoc committee chaired by Ms. Estremera Jimenez looking at the lottery system for magnet schools. She said Mr. Traber and Mr. Benejan Grajales were assigned to the committee.

Mr. Traber said the Instruction and Support Services Committee was done meeting for the year.

Ms. Estremera Jimenez said there was a CAFE webinar on June 17th for school funding changes.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT:

Dr. Avery said the district is moving away from Parent Square to Power School. He said Power School is currently used for attendance, report cards, and discipline.

A video was played describing the transition to Power School for parents.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said both platforms would be up through October to make sure everyone transitions to Power School. He said \$80,000 was saved

by leaving Parent Square and Power School would be covered by the existing contract. He described the information the administration receives from Power School data and messages. He said there will be options for parents to contact parent leaders through the app, and screening for key words to expose inappropriate conduct on the app.

Ms. Estremera Jimenez raised a concern about late notifications for half-day dismissals. Dr. Avery described scenarios that come into play for calling half days, which often involve emergencies. He noted the makeup days pushed the school year into late June. He said half days are credited by the state as full days. He said on weather days he is often up at 4:00 in the morning in discussions with other Fairfield County superintendents. He added that he informs the board of the reasons for cancellations or dismissals. He noted the state requirements for the required amount of academic instruction.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said the last two days of school are scheduled for half days next year.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said he anticipated it would take three to four years to have a dedicated facility for BMA, but the state legislation is for two years, so there will be the ability to go back to the commissioner for an additional two years. He said work on the logistical aspects of BMA and Fairchild Wheeler (FCW) is still

underway. He said he believed the students are resilient, the teachers are fantastic, and we need to get our parents in support.

In response to a question about recruiting for Fairchild Wheeler and BMA, Dr. Avery said the Fairchild Wheeler has the capacity for about 1,500 students, and currently there are about 900 there, with BMA about to add 250. He noted both FCW and BMA have long wait lists. Bridgeport students are limited to 70 percent of FCW. He said we have been looking for space for BMA for two years, but other options did not work out.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said he has met with students at FCW and BMA, and there were meetings with FCW teachers and parents. He said he was pleased with the meetings. He said he responded to several questions. He added that FCW and BMA students would be meeting at a luncheon, and there will be activities for students from both campuses at the end of this year and at the beginning of next year.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Mr. Traber moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina.

Items approved were Approval of the May 26, 2026, Regular Meeting minutes; Approval of the membership with the Council of the Great City Schools; Approval of the

following solar contracts: Central High School, Luis Munoz Marin School and Curiale School; Approval of the SEED Special Education Purchases for FY26 year-end closing: New SPED classroom furniture, SPED curriculums; Approval of the updated Ed Specification of the Specialized School; and Approval of the FY26-27 Operating Budget.

Ms. Estremera Jimenez asked Item 9-B to be removed from the consent agenda.

The motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Ron Rapice said the district had a partnership with the Aspetuck Land Trust to plant Miyawaki forests in seven district schools, which were installed at no cost to the district or the city. Students were involved in the process, and they learned about the trees and the environment.

Mary Ellen Lemay of the Aspetuck Land Trust, who obtained the grant from the state and the architect of the forests, displayed a slide presentation, including before-and-after photos of the schools. She said the forest at Winthrop was moved to Blackham because of construction. She said Bridgeport has lowest tree canopy rate of any city in the state at 20 percent.

Ms. Lemay said a large Miyawaki forest has been planted at Seaside Park. She thanked the city and the board for allowing us to plant the forests.

Dr. Avery said it was great to see the kids engaging with the forests, and he appreciated the partnership.

Jorge Garcia, chief operations officer, thanked Aspetuck on behalf of the district. Mr. Rapice said a local attorney, Joel Green, pledged a donation to replant the forest at the new Winthrop.

Christopher Siano, assistant superintendent for human capital, presented on the RFP process for substitute services. He said four bidders are being interviewed tomorrow, with the recommendation to be presented to the board at a special meeting.

Nestor Nkwo, chief financial officer, said a three-year contract is being sought, with the option of a one or two-year extension.

The next agenda item was on the Partnership for School Leadership proposal.

Margaret Hughes, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, said the proposal is for a partnership with Partners for Educational Leadership as part of Dr. Avery's vision for the district. She said he is focused on strengthening principal leadership and to drive

instructional improvement. She said the total cost is \$171,875.

Ms. Hughes said there a federal grant for principal training that was applied for, which would pick up fifty percent of the cost.

Ms. Hughes said the proposal includes a two-day principal retreat; eight meetings over the year on strategies; and developing a principals' innovation cohort.

In response to a question, Ms. Hughes said it was part of next fiscal year's budget.

Mr. Traber moved to table the item. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

In response to a question, Ms. Hughes said we want to engage them for August 10th and 11th.

Mr. Traber said this came out of nowhere and we haven't had a chance to work through it. He said he had some serious questions about the organization because it has charter school connections.

In response to a question, Hannah Whitley, deputy grants director, said the grant was submitted today, with an expected federal review within the next three months. If the award is received, it will be around this time next year.

Ms. Hughes said we would look to include the expenditure in the Alliance Grant. She added that the final quote was

not received until May 28th, which was after the last ISS Committee meeting.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on approval of the FCC USAC e-Rate 471 Category 1 and 2 for vendors.

Ms. Estremera Jimenez moved, *be it resolved that the governing board for Bridgeport school district, (1) authorizes the filing of FCC Form 471, Schools and Libraries' Universal Service Program services ordered for the fiscal year July 1st, 2026 through June 30th, 2027; (2) authorizes payment of the applicant's share subject to the following conditions: (1) approval of funding of the discounted portion by the School and Libraries Division (SLD) of the Universal Service Administration Company, and (2) receipt of services during the fiscal year July 1st, 2026 through June 30th, 2027."*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Medina and unanimously approved.

Mr. Traber moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod