

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
MINUTES OF MEETING – MARCH 13, 2008**

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A meeting of the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Shepard Building - 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 & convened at 4:15 p.m.

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**In Attendance:**

P. Guida, A. Beretta, C. Callahan, R. Camara, F. Caprio, K. Forbes, A. Davis.

In the absence of Chairman Flanders, Vice Chairman Patrick Guida, chaired the meeting.

**Public Comments**

- Sarah Morenon – Providence Nathaniel Green Middle School librarian – Ms. Morenon spoke to the Board about the BEP, specifically in reference to school libraries. She informed them that the Providence school district has never been in compliance with the BEP library standards. She urged the members of the board to update the BEP and enforce the standards.
- Barbara Ashby – George J. West Elementary School librarian – Ms. Ashby urged the members of the Board of Regents to work to ensure equitable library services for all Rhode Island students. She said that because of state and local budget cuts to schools, districts are cutting library staff which is causing non compliance of the BEP. She asked that the Regents take steps to ensure that all districts are in compliance with the BEP library standards.
- Margery Dumaine – Woonsocket Library specialist – Ms. Dumaine informed the Board that last week, seven (out of nine) Woonsocket librarians were given layoff notices because of budget cuts. She emphasized that these cuts were made for “purely financial reasons, with little apparent regard for the loss in library services to our students...”. She urged the Board to keep the school libraries open and staffed – to uphold the mandates.
- Esther Wolk – Coventry Library Specialist – Ms. Wolk spoke to the group about the role that library and media specialists play in schools – work with students and teachers across the curriculum; collaborate with teachers and students on the use of instructional technology including: computer labs, Smart Boards, laptops, and LCD projectors; members of RILINK and share resources with 91 schools across Rhode Island. They have a positive impact on student achievement. Ms. Wolk talked about the budget cuts and the affect of the cuts on school libraries and urged members to support the BEP mandates.
- Roger Cichy – RI Music Educators Assoc. – Mr. Cichy talked about the importance of the arts in students lives. He emphasized that there needs to be time in schools for students to explore and develop their “creative skills”. He urged the members of the Board to support the arts in schools.
- Mark Colozzi – Music education coordinator for Cranston Schools – Mr. Colozzi spoke about the importance of affording students the opportunity for demonstration of the required elements of proficiency in the fine arts for graduation. He said that the current .5 minimum credit requirement is no longer adequate to satisfy the breadth and depth of knowledge required to satisfy the arts proficiencies. Suggestions for specific changes to the Secondary Regulations included the following:

3.1 lines 236 – 242 – (3) “include successful completion of at least twenty academic credits (or the equivalent) with fifteen of the credits in the core academic subjects represented by four academic credits of English Language Arts, four academic credits of mathematics, three academic credits of science, three academic credits of history/social studies and a minimum of one academic credit in the arts. The additional five required academic credits are presumed to include, but not be limited to, credits in world languages and technology pursuant to local district policies and sufficient to allow students to demonstrate the range of proficiency required by section 3.0 of these regulations”.

- Peter Quesnel – Providence media specialist – Mr. Quesnel spoke to the Regents about the support that librarians and media specialists give to students on their senior projects. He expressed his support of the PBGR system and asked the Regents to support the mandates as written in the BEP.

#### Chairman’s Remarks

Vice Chairman, Patrick Guida reported that there have been two public hearings on the proposed Secondary Regulations/proficiency based graduation/graduation requirements and that the hearings had gone very well.

#### Minutes of Minutes

**MOVED AND SECONDED: That, the Minutes of the Rhode Island Board of Regents Meeting of February 6, 2008 be Approved as Presented.**

**Approved Unanimously.**

#### Approval of Member to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

RIDE staff member, Keith Oliveira presented the item for consideration. He told the members of the Board that the candidate, Mary Bird, had attended the Board of Regents State and Charter Schools committee meeting held earlier in the day and had been interviewed by the members of the committee – Amy Beretta and Angus Davis. Ms. Bird is currently working for the Regional Educational Assessment Diagnostic Services (READS). Ms. Bird provides services to deaf and hard of hearing students and their families

**MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Appointment of Mary Bird to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, as Recommended by the Board of Regents’ State and Charter Schools Committee.**

**VOTE: Approved Unanimously.**

#### Approval of Members to the William M. Davies Board of Trustees

Next, Keith Oliveira presented Mr. Robert J. Boisselle, who is currently the President and CEO of Associated Builders and Contractors of Rhode Island for consideration to fill a vacancy for the William M. Davies Career and Technical Center Board of Trustees. Mr. Boisselle also met with the Board of Regents State and Charter Schools Committee.

**MOVED AND SECONDED** That, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Appointment of Robert J. Boisselle to the William M. Davies Career and Technical School Board of Trustees, as Recommended by the Board of Regents' State and Charter Schools Committee.

**VOTE:** Approved Unanimously.

Mr. Guida announced that the second candidate to fill a vacancy to the Davies board, Mr. George Ortiz, Jr. had notified the Chairman of the Trustees that he had decided not to seek the position.

**Approval of Exeter/West Greenwich School Construction**

RIDE staff member, Joseph DaSilva presented the agenda item for consideration. He briefly reviewed the Exeter/West Greenwich project – district wide renovations to address building code compliance, roof repairs, handicapped accessibility, failing boilers, security, infrastructure upgrades, heating, ventilation and air conditioning issues. These repairs will also address energy conservation. He explained that these renovations and repairs are necessary for the health, safety, and well being of students and staff and to protect state and local investments made in the school facilities. The total for the projects is \$5,877,308. He then introduced school superintendent, Thomas Geismar and Director of Administration, Bob Ross. Mr. Geismar told the Regents that he found the process, under the new Board of Regents building regulations to be “rigorous, but fair”. He also thanked RIDE finance staff, Joe DaSilva for all his help through the process.

**MOVED AND SECONDED THAT,** the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Necessity of School Construction Project Totaling \$5,877,308 Pursuant to 16-7-41.1 as presented.

**VOTE:** Approved Unanimously.

**Approval of One Day Closure of Narragansett High School**

Commissioner McWalters explained that this agenda item is a request from the Narragansett school system to waive the three hour school day requirement for January 2, 2008. He told the members of the Board that on January 2, 2008, there had been a gas leak at the Narragansett High School forcing the evacuation and early dismissal of students. As per R.I.G.L. 16-2-3, in the event of an emergency that forces the closing of a school in a district, the Board of Regents may reduce the number of school days for that school. Mr. McWalters explained that keeping only one school open for an extra day at the end of the school year, would place an unreasonable additional expense on the district.

**MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT,** the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Recommendation that Narragansett High School not be required to make up the instructional day which was lost on January 2, 2008.

**VOTE:** Approved Unanimously.

### Budget Update

The Commissioner announced that there is a House Finance hearing on the Department operating budget and state aid scheduled tomorrow (Friday) at 12:00 noon. This hearing will be held along with Higher Education. The House Finance Committee will focus their attention on the difference between the Governor's budget and the Regents budget. The group discussed the importance of the Regents connecting with the general assembly and how best to do this. They acknowledged that this year their primary work with the legislature should be about education issues rather than money, however should look at how to be more proactive. The group requested that this item be placed on a future agenda.

### Update on Governor's Task Force on Collective Bargaining

Commissioner McWalters reported that a letter to the Governor has gone out outlining the recommendations of the task force group. He told the Regents that the recommendations fall into three categories – Teacher Job Actions/RIDE attorneys have prepared DRAFT legislation to amend the Michaelson Act to address concerns raised regarding teacher strikes and “work to rule”, along with engaging the Department of Labor and Training to improve the dispute resolution process; Educator Standards/clarify and expand the RIPTS and development of statewide criteria for local performance-based evaluation systems and a “Code of Professional Responsibility”; Agenda for Educator Quality/Turning policy statements from “Agenda for Educator Quality” into specific actions.

### Committee Reports

Chairman of the Board Programs/School Improvement Committee, Patrick Guida announced that this committee will meet on March 26 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Chairman for the State and Charter Schools Committee, Angus Davis, told the Board that along with interviewing the candidates to fill vacancies on the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees and the William M. Davies Board of Trustees, his committee had met with staff from the various charter schools to review their requests for revising their charters; and that the committee had decided, in light of the legislative moratorium on charter schools not to apply for a federal grant.

### Commissioner's Report

- Commissioner McWalters reported to the Board that the Governor's Urban Task Force has met for the first time and is continuing to meet;
- That the hearings on the Secondary Regulations have been held and now RIDE staff will begin looking at the comments and recommendations received from those hearings and bring forward recommendations to the Board for approval. He said that the focus of the comments was on protecting the middle schools, staying with the PBGRs - especially the arts; and on graduation requirements – specifically the testing element.

- The Commissioner continued the discussion of the testing requirement/NECAP, asking the Director of Assessment, MaryAnn Snider, to join him at the table. Ms. Snider told the Board that she had met with over 200 superintendents, principals and guidance counselors to discuss the results of the NECAP tests. She said that, while the local district representatives are upset with the results of the NECAP math tests, they are looking at constructive ways to work together to increase those scores. They are asking for leadership from the state to provide statewide professional development opportunities for their teachers. Additionally, the department is working with groups to re-think math programs and teacher preparation programs. The Governor has also announced that he will be hosting a symposium this spring to work on remedies.

#### Executive Agenda

As per R.I.G.L. 42-46-4 & 5(a)(1) and (2), the meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m. for Executive Session.

(The meeting reconvened to open session at 7:20 p.m.)

Vice Chairman, Patrick Guida reported that no votes had been taken in Executive Session.

**MOVED AND SECONDAD: THAT, the Minutes of the Executive Session be Sealed.**

**VOTE: Approved Unanimously.**

#### Adjournment

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.