



Enclosure 2c
June 28, 2016

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
June 7, 2016

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Work Session was held on June 7, 2016, at the Rhode Island Department of Education, Room 501, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI.

Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the Work Session of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, declared a quorum present and noted for the record that Council Chair McConaghy would not be attending the meeting. She then called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

Present: Barbara Cottam, *Colby Anderson, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

Absent: Daniel McConaghy

[*ex-officio, non-voting member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Karin Forbes, it was

VOTED: That the Council Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the work session of June 7, 2016.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

Chair Cottam congratulated Colby Anderson on being re-elected by his peers as the PK-12 student representative, ex-officio, non-voting member of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, for a second term.

3. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner began his report by encouraging Council Members to join him and Governor Raimondo at the annual ceremony to recognize Rhode Island's Commended Schools. The event will be held on Tuesday, June 14th, at 4:30 p.m., at the Rockwell School, in the Bristol Warren Regional School District.

Next, he reported on the projected legislative session timeline:

- Tuesday, June 7, 2016 – House Finance considers the budget of the State for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2017
- Budget is held for 7 days – House members have time to introduce amendments to the budget.
- Tuesday, June 14, 2016 – Full House considers the budget.
- Wednesday, June 15, 2016 – Senate Finance considers and votes on the Budget. Usually, if approved, budget goes right to the full Senate that afternoon for a vote.
- Thursday, June 16, 2016 – House and Senate consider priority bills.
- Friday, June 17, 2016 – House and Senate consider priority bills. Session could end if all bills are considered.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. RIDE's Guidance for R.I. Schools on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

Commissioner Wagner began by introducing David Sienko, Director of the Office of Student Community and Academic Supports, and Dr. Rosemary Reilly-Chammat, Sexuality Specialist, who have led the development of the guidance. He then proceeded by addressing the relevance of the topic on a local and national scale, and explained that RIDE is engaged with representative groups in Rhode Island in order to work parallel with federal action surrounding the safety of transgender and gender nonconforming students in schools. Commissioner Wagner talked about the dual responsibility of the state, which involves keeping up with the efforts of the federal government, while providing guidance to school districts as they prepare to implement their own local policies.

Commissioner Wagner stressed that the bottom line is that all students need to feel secure and safe in their learning environments and be provided access to the facilities that are consistent with their gender identity. He also noted that there is nothing in the guidance that prohibits students from having increased privacy options, which can be low cost and common sense.

David Sienko discussed the potential fluidity of the Guidance as a result of the continuously changing federal law regarding transgender issues. He stated his appreciation of the work done by Commissioner Wagner and the Council and that his office will be providing guidance to the districts as needed.

Council Member Callahan noted that she liked the tone of the Guidance, while Council Member Purtill questioned the strength of some of the language in the document. Mr. Sienko explained that it is important to leave the language broad enough in order to encourage proactive thought instead of just compliance. Commissioner Wagner echoed this idea, stating the importance of the Guidance as a tool to teach the public about this issue.

RIDE's goal is to post the Guidance by June so that school districts can utilize it for the upcoming school year.

b. Fiscal Year 2018 Capital Budget

Commissioner Wagner addressed the need to get the capital component of the budget moved forward by July 1st, which includes 11 projects (9 existing and 2 new) costing around 55M dollars, 35M which was already encumbered.

Mark Dunham, Director of Finance, joined the table and stated that most of the projects are already in place, but there are two new project proposals that will be included in the 2018 Capital Budget - one at the MET School and the other at Davies Career and Technical High School.

Council Member Beretta asked if there is a study showing whether the solar panels at the MET School are going to be cost-effective and if we know how many years it will be before we recover the initial investment. She also suggested listing the two projects separate on the budget submission.

Mr. Dunham answered that the solar panel project was approved by RIDE's construction team and that it will be a reduction in operating costs. He did not know how many years it will take before the initial investment is recovered, but will have an answer for the June meeting.

Council Member Gaines asked Mr. Dunham about the availability of grants for solar panels and he replied that he would explore that possibility.

On the Davies upgrades to accommodate a welding program in cooperation with Electric Boat pilot project, Council Member Forbes asked whether there was going to be any money given to the other six districts who are also participating in the pilot program.

Commissioner Wagner replied that currently there is no money dedicated to the other six programs, but that as the programs expand, there could be a funding source in the future.

c. Proposed Draft Revisions to the Board of Education Regulations Governing the Certification of Educators in Rhode Island, for the purpose of public review and comment

Commissioner Wagner introduced the three certification related issues up for discussion:

1. Certification of Athletic Coaches
2. Approval of Substitute Teachers
3. Certification of CTE teachers transitioning from their respective industries

Certification of Athletic Coaches:

Lisa Foehr, Director of Educator Excellence and Certification Services, discussed changes in the language of statute involving athletic coaches and touched upon her conversation with the Interscholastic League. In order to get certified, coaches must meet the RIDE regulations of first-aid certification and CPR training in addition to the Interscholastic League's requirements, which include Foundations of Coaching and concussion courses. Districts would be required to ensure the eligibility of their coaches, and the process would work similarly to the way it works now with the exception of RIDE being exempt of the ability to issue permits.

Approval of Substitute Teachers:

Ms. Foehr explained that RIDE was asked to revise certification requirements, including the elimination of permits for substitute teachers. Eliminating permits and the accompanying fee would make the process more feasible, and the loss of revenue would be at the expense of the General Fund, not RIDE.

Council Member Forbes expressed her concerns about substitute teacher training requirements. Ms. Foehr addressed the issue by explaining that although it varied by district, there is a method in which substitute teaching is becoming a pipeline into a full-time teaching career.

CTE Teaching Certification

Ms. Foehr addressed the primary technical barrier that exists with CTE professionals attempting to transition into teaching in their field. There is currently a one-year preliminary certificate that has to be obtained and renewed every year for six years. She proposed the idea of turning the one-year certificate into a six-year certificate with the assumption that the individual will work to meet the requirements for certification during that time.

Council member Callahan expressed her desire for stronger language that would ensure that the individual was pursuing a teaching certificate without being monitored by a yearly renewal and the Council concurred.

Commissioner Wagner acknowledged the mutual interest between RIDE and the individuals seeking CTE teaching certification that they are certified. Ms. Foehr mentioned the possibility of partnering with a college or technical institute that offers CTE courses in order to make the process more feasible for the individuals seeking certification.

d. Proposed ETS Regenerated Educator Certification Tests and Cut-Scores

Commissioner Wagner introduced the topic and explained that it is part of the regular cycle of evaluating the test scores and tests used for certification purposes.

Lisa Foehr explained that the ESL test is a regenerated test and all individuals requiring ESL recertification must pass the most recently revised version of the test. She then discussed the multi-state regenerative study, in which two of the participants were Rhode Island teachers, that was recently administered. The recommended score that came from the study was 155. Ms. Foehr explained that the biggest change in this version of the test was redistribution of content areas in order to align with the recently revised TESOL (Teaching English to Students of Other Languages) standards. Ms. Foehr will monitor the passing rate of the test and report back to the Council at a later date.

e. RIDE's Executive Pay Plan

Commissioner Wagner started off by explaining that this plan needs to be brought before the Council on an annual basis in order to give RIDE the authority to continue to pay those employees on the executive team who are not of a different collective bargaining agreement.

There was no change in salaries and there were slight changes regarding position lines.

Changes:

- New line for title "Performance Management Executive" and "Staff Assistant."
- Consolidation of titles "Human Resources Assistant" and "Legal Staff Assistant" into "Executive Staff Assistant" line.

Commissioner Wagner acknowledged that RIDE has the authority to negotiate salaries within the given ranges when hiring new employees.

Council Member Beretta asked whether there was any benchmarking done with private sector salaries for similar positions the last time the ranges were approved as these are pretty hefty salaries compared to private sector.

Commissioner Wagner replied that he did not have the history, but that he would find out and have an answer at the next meeting.

5. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Collen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns.

Vote: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.