



Enclosure 2b
August 24, 2015

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
June 22, 2015

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education met on Monday, June 22, 2015, at the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

Absent: Lawrence Purtill

[*Non-voting member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Amy Beretta it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of June 22, 2015

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

[*Member Callahan arrived at 5:32 p.m.]

2. OPEN FORUM

In light of the fact that there were several individuals signed up to speak, Chair McConaghy went over some ground rules and reminded the audience to limit comments to two minutes or less.

Thirteen individuals spoke in favor of the ACLU petition on a moratorium on using high stakes testing as graduation requirement until 2020.

Documents provided to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education by Open Forum speakers are on file at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

3. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair McConaghy began by sharing that he is thrilled and honored to be joining the Board of Education and that he is hoping to help advance education in R.I.

He reported that this week it is anticipated that the Senate will vote on the Fiscal Year 2016, budget, which was approved by the House last week. The good news is that the budget includes the major recommendations for education funds that Governor Raimondo requested in her budget proposal. Unfortunately, the House Fiscal Year 2016 budget reduces the operating budget for RIDE by approximately \$800,000.

He also recognized the 26-member Ambassador Design Team and the two facilitators, David Moscarelli and Jeremiah Newell, and thanked them for their hard work and commitment in preparing a final draft of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for Elementary and Secondary Education.

5. REPORT OF THE ACTING COMMISSIONER

Acting Commissioner Abbott echoed Chair McConaghy's comments on the Fiscal Year 2016 budget and shared that although he is grateful for the strong budget support to our local school districts and for several key initiatives of both this Council and the Governor, RIDE did sustain a significant cut to its operating budget, which will have an impact on the level of services that the agency provides to the districts.

He also reported on some key legislative bills that RIDE is concerned about, particularly bills on charter schools from both the Senate and the House, which would require local municipal councils to approve any charter school application. The way it is written, any charter school with a statewide catchment area could be vetoed by any single municipality in the state and that is veto power over this Council's authorizing authority, negating full statewide opportunities and access for students to public alternative schools.

He went on to report that Rhode Island has just completed the first year of PARCC assessments and that he anticipates receiving results in the fall. Because this is the first year of this new assessment, benchmarks need to be developed, which will delay getting results to districts. RIDE has also been working closely with the U.S. Department of Education around the new accountability system that will be built on the new test.

He ended his report by congratulating the Calcutt Middle School in Central Falls and Scituate High School as national winners of the 2015 Youth Awards for Energy Achievement, from the National Energy Education Development (NEED) Project.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Enclosure 5a - Strategic Planning Update

Before turning the conversation over to Acting Commissioner Abbott, Chair McConaghy shared that although he is new to the process; he has had the opportunity to look at the plan and can tell that there has been a lot of energy and effort put into it.

Acting Commissioner Abbott began by sharing how pleased he is that the 26 members of the Ambassador Design Team (ADT), whom the Council approved last December, have completed their work and are presenting this evening a near-final version of R.I.'s 2015-2020 strategic plan for elementary and secondary education. The ADT represents the diversity of this state, and he is especially pleased that the team includes four students in its membership. The plan is not only the most student-centered of any in R.I. history; it also reflects the voice of Rhode Islanders who participated in our surveys and community discussions. He ended by encouraging the members of the design team to stay together in support of the plan that they have developed and written - to stay on RIDE's case, to defend the plan, and to advocate for its success.

Some of the members of the Ambassador Design Team joined the table and shared a video of the team members talking about their personal experiences during the development of the plan and answered questions on the six priorities that the plan establishes: Teacher and Leader Support, Early Childhood Education, Personalized Learning Statewide, Globally Competent Graduates, Informed Instructional Decision-Making, and Student-Centered Resource Investment.

Enclosure 5b - R.I. Board of Regents Regulations Governing the Length of School Day

Acting Commissioner Abbott shared the proposed revisions to the regulations on the school calendar and the length of the school day, which would eliminate the confusion and contradictions regarding delayed school openings and early dismissals. Instead, they say simply: a school "shall remain open for at least three hours of instructional time in order to be considered a school day" - regardless of when the school day starts or ends.

These revised regulations would also authorize the Commissioner “to shorten the school year for individual schools based on short term emergency closures of no more than five school days.” This change obviates the need for school committees to petition the Council for emergency reductions – an operational area that we believe does not require review and discussion by a policy-making body.

Council Member Beretta asked if there is a reason why the regulations dictate when mid-terms and final exams have to take place.

Acting Commissioner Abbott replied that once the regulations are reopened, everything is on the table and that the Council has the opportunity to make suggestions and decide what it wants to regulate.

Council Members asked questions around the length of school day versus length of school year and statutory instructional minutes.

Enclosure 5c – Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Draft Bylaws

Acting Commissioner Abbott introduced the topic and explained that as a new body with all the rights and authorities of the former Board of Regents and the Board of Education and a legal entity that is able to sue and be sued, under corporation rules of the State of R.I., the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, needs to have its own set of bylaws. He went on to explain that the draft bylaws being discussed closely mirror those of the Board of Education.

Council Member Callahan raised the issue of Member Purtill’s recommendation during the last iteration of revisions, around changing the number of Board members required when requesting that an item be added to an agenda, from four members to two.

Acting Commissioner Abbott answered that the current required number of four is not untypical but that it can be whatever the Council collectively decides.

Board Chair Cottam asked how the Chair goes about setting up set sub-committees of the Council that are not ad-hoc for a specific issue per se.

Acting Commissioner Abbott replied that the Council can vote to amend the bylaws and add standing committees.

Enclosure 5d – ACLU et al Petition Proposing Amendments to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Secondary School Regulations

Acting Commissioner Abbott began by explaining the process of the petition before the Council. Under the Administrative Procedures Act, there is a section that allows virtually anyone to petition a rule-making body to revisit or create a regulation or rule. Once presented with a regulation, the rule-making body has thirty (30) days to do one of two things: Deny the petition

or start the rule-making process. He went on to explain that the Secondary School Regulations were amended in January 2015 and this same issue was in front of the Council when it voted to promulgate the regulations.

For content, Acting Commissioner Abbott explained that last year at the very last day of the legislative session, the General Assembly passed a law that made it unlawful to use the state assessment for graduation decisions effective in the graduating class of 2014. Part of the statutory change, the Council was instructed to amend the Secondary School Regulations to come in line with the statute. The statute moved the date when the state assessment could be used for graduating decisions to 2017. At a minimum, the Council was instructed by statute to change the date in the regulations from 2014 to 2017. When the regulations went out for public review and comment, the Commissioner proposed and the Council approved, extending the timeline from 2017 to 2020, giving more time for students to get prepared and the state better able to understand the test (PARCC). The regulations went out for public comment with the 2020 date as the first year that any district could use the state assessment as a graduation requirement, but during the public comment period, a couple of superintendents asked if it wasn't true that the current language in the regulations allows districts to be stricter than the state. The answer was yes, that by statute districts are allowed to use state assessments as a graduation requirement starting with the class of 2017, so it was decided and the Council approved, clarifying language allowing districts that flexibility be added to the regulations. Acting Commissioner Abbott ended by recommending that the Council deny the petition.

Council Member Callahan expressed that she is concerned with the comparability and the differences from local district to local district and that her position still stands that the Council should go forward with rulemaking.

Council Members voiced that districts already have the flexibility of using different requirements for graduation and if there are districts that feel that they are ready to implement this requirement by 2017 and that it will drive student learning, than they should be allowed to. They also stated that once a new Commissioner is on board and the PARCC testing data becomes available, that it is critical to revisit this discussion as well as figuring out a system for RIDE to hold districts accountable for providing students with the necessary resources to succeed.

Enclosure 5d - Council Determination on the ACLU et al Petition Proposing Amendments to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Secondary School Regulations

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education denies the Rule-Making Petition submitted by the ACULU et al

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 1 member
voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam,
Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: Colleen Callahan

7. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Colleen 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: Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan,
Barbara Cottam, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez,
and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.