



Enclosure 2a
September 20, 2016

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
August 9, 2016

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone, stated for the record that Council Members Gaines and Purtill would not be attending the meeting, 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, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

Absent: Jo Eva Gaines and Lawrence Purtill

[*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

[**Colleen Callahan arrived at 5:35 p.m.]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos 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 August 9, 2016

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

[Colleen Callahan arrived at 5:35 p.m.]

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2a. Minutes of the June 28, 2016, Council Meeting

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Karin Forbes, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the June 28, 2016, Council Meeting

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

[Colleen Callahan arrived at 5:35 p.m.]

3. OPEN FORUM

Chair McConaghy reported that no one had signed up to speak at Open Forum.

4. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Wagner began his report by sharing that, as required by the School Building Authority, RIDE has been collecting data from all of the schools as part of the statewide facilities assessment audit. This type of audit occurs once every five years and RIDE anticipates releasing a public report in June 2017.

Also related to facilities, Commissioner Wagner reported that the FY17 budget allocated roughly \$80M toward the upkeep of school facilities, of which \$70.9M is for housing aid and \$9.1M for School Building Authority (SBA) Capital Fund projects. Applications were made available to LEAs on August 1st for the \$9.1M SBA project fund, which addresses high priority projects in communities with limited financial capabilities and are due to RIDE by September 9th. The prioritized projects will be presented to the Council at the October work session for approval at the November meeting.

Commissioner Wagner went on to report that, at the August 30th work session, RIDE will be presenting to the Council its annual revised and current-service-level budget request, which is due to be submitted to the state by October 1st.

He also reported that included in the Governor's FY 2017 budget are dedicated funds to enable students in all public high schools to take the PSAT (grade 10 -Fall) and SAT (grade 11 - Spring) during the school -day at no cost to families. RIDE created more space to allow for PSAT/SAT testing by scaling back some of the PARCC testing at the high school level. School districts need to order the PSAT tests from the College Board by September 23rd.

Council Member Beretta asked if RIDE is monitoring whether or not districts are ordering the tests to ensure that all students are afforded the same opportunity.

Commissioner Wagner replied that, although it's a local decision, RIDE is in regular contact with the College Board, and that starting next week RIDE will be reaching out to those districts that have not ordered the tests so as to ensure that all students are aware of their options.

Commissioner Wagner also shared some of the very exciting opportunities and pathways available to students in career and technical education this coming school year. He highlighted the P-TECH program, an innovative educational model that integrates high school, college, and career training. Through a four-to-six year experience, P-TECH students earn both a high-school diploma and an industry-recognized associate's degree, at no cost to the student. Upon graduation, P-TECH students are first-in-line for job opportunities with the industry in which their school formed a partnership.

Commissioner Wagner shared that RIDE is being sued by the Chariho Regional School District to shut down the P-TECH program in Westerly. Chariho believes that they have an agreement in place that allows them to benefit from taxpayer monies to the detriment of all other communities in the State, perpetually. RIDE will defend these options for students as it believes that Chariho's action is not only morally wrong and policy inaccurate, but legally indefensible.

Next, Commissioner Wagner highlighted some of the work around Charter Schools that the Council will be addressing over the coming months:

- Last month RIDE put out the RFP for new charter schools to open in the fall of 2017, with proposals due by September 29, 2016.
- Due to the short timeline, in parallel, RIDE will also issue an RFP for charter schools looking to open in fall 2018.
- Later this month, RIDE will also be issuing the expansion application, for those charters looking to expand.
- To ensure compliance with state statute, at the September 20th meeting, RIDE will bring recommendations to the Council on how to determine the financial and academic impact of opening new charter schools or expanding existing ones.
- This fall, two charter schools (Blackstone Academy and Compass) are up for renewal.
- RIDE will also be presenting to the Council an updated Charter Framework, which will be used to guide renewal decisions moving forward.

Commissioner Wagner also reported on the Study Commission that came out of the recent legislative session. It tasks RIDE to look at a plan, strategy, and timeline for a statewide approach to a coherent curriculum, professional development, and site-based management work. The Council has to file a report on this work to the General Assembly by July 1, 2017. Because the timeline overlaps with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) federal law, the one way to approach this task is to see the Study Commission work as tools to support the goals and mechanisms that RIDE will be establishing through ESSA.

Commissioner Wagner ended his report by sharing that the PARCC Assessment results will be publicly released at the end of August.

Council Member Stevos voiced the importance of having a student voice at the table of decision-making bodies and asked if RIDE could survey the school districts to find out how many school committees have student representatives on their boards.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. ESSA Update

Deputy Commissioner Snider gave a summary of where RIDE is in the process of public engagement, emerging themes, and requirements. She expressed that ESSA is an opportunity for Rhode Island to not only adhere to the reauthorization federal law, but to also bring coherence and alignment with lots of other initiatives happening in education. It is also a time for Rhode Island to start thinking about accountability not as a compliance exercise but really as a discussion and shared responsibility focused on student learning outcomes.

Deputy Snider went over the ESSA topics under consideration for the R.I. State Plan:

- Standards and Assessment – Will need to confirm that we continue to align to the Common Core Standards, the Next Generation Science Standards, and testing program, especially at the high school level.
- Accountability, Support and Improvement for Schools – How we will hold schools accountable and the types of supports we will provide.
- Supporting Excellent Educators – Opportunity for R.I. to bring to the forefront its Equity Plan, which ensures that every student gets equal opportunity to learn from excellent educators.- Supporting All Students – How to ensure that students who are in foster care or who are homeless are taught in schools that are best for them, even if they change residencies.
- Strategic Use of Federal Funds – Decisions have to be made about holding back more of a percentage at the State level to support critical student outcomes statewide.

Next she went over the plan for engaging Rhode Islanders as a community in the ESSA conversation:

- Committee of Practitioners - Diverse group of 30 or so representatives who will meet monthly to give input on high-level decisions.
- Public Engagement - Public input sessions in the fall, survey scheduled in the winter, public comment period in early spring, and a draft plan to the Council in March.

Commissioner Wagner expressed that there will be lots of discussion, but it's going to come down to two things: what are our metrics and what is our transformation strategy when a school does not meet those metrics year after years?

Chair McConaghy voiced that, as Commissioner Wagner embarks on his second year as Commissioner, this is an incredible opportunity for R.I to step up and elevate the State in terms of its delivery of education. We need to start to imagine and put into place things that really make a difference and change some of the challenges.

Board Chair Cottam asked where R.I. stands now in terms of low-performing schools, how long have those schools been low-performing, and what has been done to rectify the problem.

Commissioner Wagner replied that currently there are roughly 30 schools statewide that are identified under the current classification system as either focus or priority, with the vast majority (20 to 25) of those schools being in Providence. Many of these schools have been identified for many years.

Council Member Beretta expressed that coming off a low-performing school designation can be difficult and a little more rigorous than it should be, and said that is something that the Council needs to look at, long and hard. The designation itself for some of these schools is not truly appropriate, but there are some schools where it is very much appropriate and we should have done more, sooner, to address the problem.

Council Member Callahan voiced that the definition of how a school gets designated as low-performing is very critical and that the ESSA opportunities that Commissioner Wagner mentioned earlier give us the chance to look at multiple contributing factors when classifying schools.

Chair Cottam expressed her frustration with the alarming number of low-performing schools in Providence. She requested that at the next meeting Commissioner Wagner report out on the list of the low-performing schools segmented out by city and town and how long they have been designated low-performing.

Council Member Stevos voiced the need to address chronic absenteeism as well as suspension rates, as they also affect a school's designation.

b. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Funding Policy

Commissioner Wagner introduced Lisa Bisaccia, CVS Health, Senior Vice-President and Chief Human Resources Officer, who serves as the Chair of the CTE Trust, who joined the table to address the CTE Funding Policy proposal. Commissioner Wagner reminded everyone that there were some open issues earlier in the year on the process for engagement between the CTE Board and Trust and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education around program approval and program funding. The issue, which was revisited and ultimately settled by the General Assembly, gives the Board of Education and RIDE the authority over program approval and funding; however, the statute that was enacted in 2014 requires the advice and consent of the CTE Board on the policy that guides funding decisions.

By way of background, Ms. Bisaccia explained that when this work was started, the two Boards (the Trust and the Board), knew from the get-go that they needed to work in conjunction with one another to come up with a mission to ensure that they were in lockstep on how they wanted to impact career and technical education in Rhode Island.

Their first order of business was to determine the work that needed to be done to ensure that, when students graduate from a CTE program, whether from a Center or a comprehensive high school, they are attractive candidates for employers who have good wage-paying, good-future jobs, and that they are qualified to take those jobs upon graduating from twelfth grade.

It was determined that the Board and Trust would look at those industry sectors that are in the highest demand in Rhode Island and pair with representatives from those industries to help define how they would determine and how they would define qualifications and standards for students graduating.

Ms. Bisaccia expressed that members of the Board and Trust are not professional educators and that they leave it up to the professionals to figure out what the curriculum should be to produce those outcomes. What they are trying to do is to codify the outcomes so that an employer understands what they are getting and feels excited about being able to hire someone who is able to hit the ground running, do certain things on day one, and proceed on the job or through other education to continue to learn.

The sectors are being chosen based on the economic opportunity as defined by the jobs, which are informed by the Department of Labor and Training, the Governor's Workforce Board, and by many of the employer representatives who sit on the CTE Board and Trust.

Ms. Bisaccia went on to explain that the second piece of the work that the CTE Board and Trust worked on was on how to reinforce this objective with the CTE programs in schools. It was determined that the best way would be through funding so that schools are encouraged to adopt these standards or to make a good-faith effort to adopt them. The ability for schools to get additional funding will depend in large part on their good-faith efforts to comply with the standards and eventually reach a point where all of their graduates are in fact qualified, based on the standards that have been set out. Recognizing that the schools will not be able to meet the standards overnight, the CTE Board and Trust has put in some flexibility for schools to make the journey, get there, and get their journey reinforced. They also leave it to RIDE to make the decision as to whether or not a school is on the right trajectory toward meeting the standards in a timely manner.

Commissioner Wagner clarified that the funding being discussed is not the base funding formula nor the federal Perkins funds, but rather the state's discretionary high-cost and innovation categorical dollars.

Council Member Callahan voiced that she understands that the Board of Education and the CTE Board and Trust will work in conjunction to make program decisions, but she is not clear where the care and control of additional funds that are allocated by the General Assembly for CTE programs lies and whether the funds are being directed to the schools by RIDE.

Commissioner Wagner answered that although the collaboration between all parties is the spirit of the work, the mechanism for disbursement of those funds would stay with RIDE. While the CTE Trust is a nonprofit organization that is able to receive and dispense funds, it fully intends to work and collaborate with RIDE as both entities work to achieve similar things.

RIDE is working on the terms of an MOU to commit a \$1M of the CTE categorical funds to seed the work of the CTE Trust. The intent is not only to have dollars behind the work that they are doing, but, equally important, when they engage in their philanthropic fundraising they have dollars that they can show as matching dollars.

Board Chair Cottam asked for clarification on the meaning of high-skill high-demand versus high-skill AND high-demand, as written on the policy document.

Ms. Bisaccia replied that in an ideal world they are looking for jobs where demand exceeds supply, where a student can come out of a good program and be prepared for a job that is not a minimum-wage job, and where the skill-set within that industry sector is one that will allow for further growth. The primary focus has been on defining industry sectors that will produce students who are qualified for and are attracted to employers, rather than investing resources in industry sectors where there isn't a lot of demand and perhaps not a future for students.

Council Member Callahan expressed that it is important for the MOU that is being drafted to be shared with Council members prior to decisions being made about moving funds over to the Trust.

Deputy Abbott explained that categorical aid is part of foundation aid, and, as such, that money has to be spent by LEAs by definition. It is considered state aid and therefore has to have parameters that need to be in line with the Funding Policy and comply with rules and expectations on how it gets spent.

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of Appeals Committee Recommendations

6a1 - Newport Community School v. Middletown School Committee and Tiverton School Committee

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That in the matter of Newport Community School v. Middletown School Committee and Tiverton School Committee, the decision of the Commissioner is being remanded to the Commissioner, as presented.

Vote: 7 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, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

6a2. DCYF v. Foster-Glocester School Committee

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That in the matter of DCYF v. Foster-Glocester School Committee, the decision of the Commissioner is affirmed, as presented

Vote: 7 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, Marta Martinez, and
Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair McConaghy entertained a motion to enter into executive session to discuss:

7a. Commissioner Wagner's performance review, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(1)

Chair McConaghy noted for the record that Commissioner Wagner had been notified of his right to have the discussion in item 7a held in open session and that he has indicated no objection to proceeding in executive session.

On a motion duly made by Joyce Stevos and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education convenes in executive session pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(1) for the reason set forth above.

All non-Council members in the audience were excused with the exception of Ken Wagner, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Council reconvened in open session at 7:45 p.m.

Chair McConaghy reported that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Joyce Stevos, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education seal the minutes of the executive session held on August 9, 2016

Vote: 7 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, Marta Martinez, and
Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

8. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Karin Forbes, it was

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

Vote: 7 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, Marta Martinez, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.