



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
November 7, 2017

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the November 7, 2017, meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, which was held at the RI School for the Deaf. He declared a quorum present, noted for the record that Council Member Beretta would be arriving late, and called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Present: Daniel McConaghy, *Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, **Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

[*Council Member Beretta arrived at 5:50 p.m.]

[**Council Member Gaines arrived at 6:10 p.m.]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Marta Martinez it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of November 7, 2017

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

Daniel McConaghy, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2a. Minutes of the October 24, 2017, Council Meeting

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the October 24, 2017, Council Meeting

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

Daniel McConaghy, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam,
Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

[Council Member Beretta arrived at 5:50 p.m.]

[Council Member Gaines arrived at 6:10 p.m.]

2b. Minutes of the October 24, 2017, Executive Session

On a motion duly made by Gara Field and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the October 24, 2017, Executive Session

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

Daniel McConaghy, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam,
Karen Davis, Gara Field, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

[Council Member Beretta arrived at 5:50 p.m.]

[Council Member Gaines arrived at 6:10 p.m.]

3. OPEN FORUM

Eight individuals spoke in opposition to RIDE's recommendation of the Highlander Charter School charter renewal.

Two individuals spoke in support of RIDE's recommendation of the Achievement First Rhode Island charter renewal.

Eight individuals spoke in opposition to RIDE's recommendation of the Beacon Charter School charter renewal.

Seven individuals spoke in support of RIDE's recommendation of the Kingston Hill Academy Charter School charter renewal.

One individual spoke in opposition to RIDE's recommendation of the Sheila "Skip" Nowell Academy charter renewal.

One individual spoke in opposition to RIDE's recommendation of the Beacon and Highlander Charter Schools' charter renewals.

Materials provided to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education by Open Forum speakers and/or submitted to be shared with Council members, are on file at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

4. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER

In the interest of time, Commissioner Wagner waived his Report of the Commissioner.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Charter Schools - Request for Renewals

Commissioner Wagner began the discussion by outlining the modifications made to the existing charter performance framework after the conclusion of last year's charter cycle. The following adjustments were made in response to feedback from the Council, the charter community and the general public:

- The public's ability to weigh-in on the school's fiscal impact;
- The Council's ability to visit the charter schools;
- The opportunity for Council members to ask questions directly of charter leaders at Council meetings in which charter school proposals are being discussed;
- RIDE conducting an in-depth review of the charter's performance over the course of its term and conducting differentiated site-visits resulting on recommendations that truly reflect best practices.

Prior to turning the conversation over to RIDE staff to present the Department's recommendations, Commissioner Wagner expressed that this evening's conversation is not only about charter school authorization, it is also about the balance in which struggling district schools are going to be approached.

Next, the RIDE team (Brian Darrow, Director, and Paula Barney, Charter School Coordinator) presented the Commissioner's recommendation on the eight charter schools that are up for renewal:

Enclosure 5a1 – Achievement First Rhode Island – Recommendation of a 5-year renewal

- Strong record of academic performance.
- After an in-depth review, RIDE has no material concerns about Achievement First's long-term fiscal sustainability.

Enclosure 5a2 – Beacon Charter School – Recommendation of a 3-year renewal with sustainability conditions:

- The charter must verify the discontinued use of the qualified applicant policy, including the charter's admissions policy and enrollment procedures.
- The charter must support any applicable annual audit of enrollment policies and procedures conducted by RIDE.
- RIDE staff will monitor Beacon's charter lottery for the next three years.
- The "qualified applicant policy" resulted in the rejection of 15 students from being admitted to the charter and a question was posed as to whether these students have since been provided an opportunity to be admitted to the school.

Council Members expressed their disappointment with the school's violation of state regulations and questioned whether a three-year renewal was too generous. Commissioner Wagner and members of the RIDE team argued that since Beacon has acknowledged its mistake and revised its admission policy that it would be unfair to punish over 300 students for the mistakes of a handful of adults.

Enclosure 5a3 – Highlander Charter School – Recommendation of a 3-year renewal

- In 2015-16 the charter received a composite index score of 40, warning level performance, which triggered the additional analysis of the school comparison indicator.
- In 2016-17 the charter improved its composite index score to 58, and overall K-12 performance increased in math and in ELA.
- A 3-year term will allow for RIDE to ensure that the charters improved academic performance continues.
- After an in depth review, RIDE has no material concerns about the fiscal sustainability of the charter.

Enclosure 5a4 – International Charter School – Recommendation of a 5-year renewal

- Strong record of academic performance.
- The charter exceeds expectations in 2016-17 on the organizational performance indicator.

Enclosure 5a5 - Kingston Hill Academy – Recommendation of a 5-year renewal with sustainability conditions

- The sustainability conditions are in response to the charter’s financial performance.
- On a quarterly basis RIDE will review the charters financial reports and an update report regarding its progression on school construction projects and determine if the charter is at risk for not meeting expectations.

Enclosure 5a6 - Paul Cuffee Charter School – Recommendation for a 5-year renewal

- Strong record of academic performance.
- The charter has received a meets performance rating for the financial, organizational and compliance performance indicators for every applicable year in the charter’s term.

Enclosure 5a7 - Sheila "Skip" Nowell Academy – Recommendation of a 3-year renewal

- The charter struggled to deliver positive student results for their unique population of parenting or at-risk teens.
- A 3-year renewal allows RIDE to evaluate the success and efficacy of the charter’s strategic plan.

Enclosure 5a8 - Village Green Virtual Charter School - Recommendation of 5-year renewal

- Strong record of academic performance.
- The charter has met performance ratings for the financial, organizational and compliance performance indicators for every applicable year in the charter’s term.

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. **Approval of the Reappointment of Dr. Ken Wagner, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Prior to asking for a motion, Chair McConaghy stated for the record that Governor Raimondo is a voting member of the Council for the purpose of appointing and retaining the Commissioner, but unfortunately, she could not be at the meeting.

Chair McConaghy shared that the Governor strongly supports the Commissioner’s contract extension and the path laid-out for the next three-years by the impressive State ESSA Plan. He went on to express that he too supports the ambitious and innovative vision for education in RI that the Commissioner has set forth over the last two and one-half years, and the need to stay the course and build on that momentum.

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the reappointment of Dr. Ken Wagner, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education for a 3-year term, and authorization of the Chair of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to negotiate an employment agreement with the Commissioner, whose reappointment is subject to advice and consent of the Board of Education.

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

Daniel McConaghy, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 8

NAYS: Amy Beretta

b. Approval of the Capital Fund Projects

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Capital Fund Projects, as presented.

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

YEAS: 9

NAYS: 0

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was

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

Vote: 9 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Daniel McConaghy, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.