



Enclosure 2a
June 16, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
May 27, 2020

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair McConaghy welcomed everyone to the May 27, 2020, virtual meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. He declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

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

Absent: Gara Field

[Board Chair Cottam joined the meeting at 4:11 p.m.]

[**Ex-officio, non-voting member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the May 27, 2020, virtual meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Board Chair Cottam joined the meeting after the acceptance of the agenda]

3. OPEN FORUM

Chair McConaghy reported that no one had signed-up to speak.

Correspondence previously submitted to Council members are on file at the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE).

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Necessity of School Construction Projects

Chair McConaghy noted for the record that he was recusing from participating in the discussion of and taking official action relating to the Necessity of School Construction Projects, as his employer may bid on work within the proposed projects.

Christine Lopes-Metcalf, RIDE's CEO of the School Building Authority (SBA) framed the discussion by noting that it is RIDE's recommendation to advance the projects based on each district's meeting the standards and criteria on the regulations for Necessity of School Construction. Districts have provided all the necessary documentation to the SBA team who vetted it and had many conversations over months, if not years, with some of the communities up until this point. With Council approval, the projects will still need General Assembly and local bond voter approval in order for them to move forward, except for Cumberland, which already secured voter approval back in November of 2018.

Council Members shared their reservations around committing state dollars considering the current financial uncertainty and if Council approval would bind the state financially. They also asked whether there is both local and state oversight over the actual commitment of dollars, what the ramifications would be if the Council decided to wait until the fall to get a better sense what the federal government is going to be willing to give Rhode Island in response to the Covid-19 crisis, and whether or not these are commitments that the General Assembly wants the Council to undertake at this time.

Ms. Lopes-Metcalf and Dr. da Silva clarified that tonight's recommendation for the Council is to approve the necessity for school construction and the state's commitment, if all statutory requirements are met, to then appropriate funds for the projects. It is up to the General Assembly to advance them or not and the local voters to advance them or not. Council has the authority to approve the necessity of the projects based on the fact that the districts have met all the regulatory criteria through the application process and that there is local need.

Upon Council vote, the General Assembly receives all the materials, including the fiscal impact statement, and it is General Assembly's decision whether to advance the projects, consequently giving the communities permission to put the bond out to vote approve the referendum or not. Other than Cumberland, which already has voter approval, if the local voters of the other four communities vote down the referendum come November, these approvals will become null and void.

They noted that RIDE continues to have ongoing conversations with the State Treasurer who has been supportive of advancing the projects as the State is coming into years where the debt capacity is reducing, which is actually an opportune time.

Part of the funding for the projects will come from the statewide bond that was previously approved and a portion of the state commitment will be offered to districts as upfront dollars, while the remainder of the state commitment comes in annual appropriations from the General Assembly, once the projects are completed. Incentive bonuses would be lost if the projects were to be delayed, and since construction bids are coming in lower than initially projected, it is ideal for districts to advance some of the projects at this time.

4. **ACTION ITEMS - Approval of Necessity of School Construction Projects**

a. **Burrillville School Department**

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Amy Beretta, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Necessity of School Construction Projects for the Burrillville School Department totaling \$7,214,000 pursuant to R.I.G.L §1707-41.1, as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 1 member abstained, as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Daniel McConaghy

b. Cranston Public School District

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Necessity of School Construction Projects for the Cranston Public School District totaling \$146,822,931 pursuant to R.I.G.L §1707-41.1, as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 1 member abstained, as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Daniel McConaghy

c. Cumberland School Department

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 Necessity of School Construction Projects for the Cumberland School Department totaling \$79,093,500 pursuant to R.I.G.L §1707-41.1, as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 1 member abstained, as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Daniel McConaghy

d. Newport Public Schools

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Necessity of School Construction Projects for the Newport Public Schools totaling \$106,334,967 pursuant to R.I.G.L §1707-41.1, as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 1 member abstained, as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Daniel McConaghy

e. Warwick Public Schools

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Necessity of School Construction Projects for the Warwick Public Schools totaling \$56,000,000 pursuant to R.I.G.L §1707-41.1, as presented.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 1 member abstained, as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Daniel McConaghy

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan 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: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Karen Davis, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Daniel McConaghy, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 4:49 p.m.