



Enclosure 2a
November 17, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
October 20, 2020

Pursuant to Governor Raimondo's Executive Order 20-75, this was a hybrid meeting.

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Board Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the October 20, 2020, Hybrid meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. She noted for the record that she and members Callahan and Purtill were attending in person, while members Beretta, Davis, Gaines, Martinez, and Student Representative Brandon Feliz, were joining via the Zoom Webinar platform. She also noted that Member Field would not be joining the meeting. She declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Participating in Person: Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, and Lawrence Purtill

Remote Participation: Amy Beretta, Karen Davis, *Brandon Feliz, Jo Eva Gaines, and Marta Martinez,

Absent: Gara Field

[*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

Public access was provided to attendees of this Zoom webinar in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and the provisions of the Executive Order; contact information was provided for those experiencing technical difficulties.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the October 20, 2020, hybrid meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the October 6, 2020, Meeting

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the October 6, 2020, Hybrid Meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. OPEN FORUM

16 individuals (a student, a state legislator, parents, teachers, and substitute teachers) signed-up to speak during the Open Forum on the state of Providence schools:

- Unqualified substitute teachers
- Per diem pay for long-term substitute teachers
- Ventilation issues and lack of PPE
- The need for more frequent testing
- Question on who is in charge of contracts (Aramark and Gilbane)
- Breakdown in trust, collaboration and lack of transparency
- Inequitable options for students of color – stop using them as guinea pigs
- Concerns with funding to charter schools and high-stake testing companies
- Allow more than two minutes for Open Forum speakers
- Concerns with students taking RIPTA as drivers are not district employees
- VLA is a complete debacle
- Work with teachers, parents, and students to collaborate around solutions
- Hold RIDE and the State accountable for answering questions raised at meetings
- What happened to the \$30M allocated to fixing the schools before the pandemic hit
- The need for RIDE to get creative, innovative and transparent about data
- Teachers expected to teach both virtually and in person at the same time to two different groups of students

A parent of a Pawtucket student, spoke on the district's refusal to engage in discussion regarding school reopening for in-person education for additional students.

The Head of the Sheila "Skip" Nowell Charter School, spoke in support of the school's two-year charter extension.

Written testimony addressed to Council members in advance of the meeting is available at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Commissioner Infante-Green thanked everyone who spoke and expressed that they will get answers to their concerns as requested. She stated that she knows for a fact that there is a lot of PPE equipment and that wipes have been replaced by spray bottles. Those items need to be requested from the principals and the requests are documented.

4. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

In honor of Teacher Recognition month, Commissioner Infante-Green thanked and commended Rhode Island teachers for their hard work over the last several months and expressed how it is truly an honor to be a part of such a strong and resilient group. As she visits schools throughout the state, she witnesses teachers who are innovative and hitting it out of the park. She noted that out of an abundance of caution, RIDE made the difficult decision to cancel the annual Educator Recognition WaterFire event. However, determined to celebrate the accomplishments of Teachers of the Year and the State's award-winning educators, during the next several weeks, RIDE will be delivering yard-signs and sponsor gift bags to each awardee at their homes.

Member Callahan voiced that she doesn't see anything as far as an update on the facility walkthroughs that were conducted this summer. She requested that a checklist of what was done and the status of where things are right now be provided to the Council.

Commissioner Infante-Green responded that she will clarify once again that not one school was allowed to open unless all the issues were mitigated.

Member Callahan expressed that she understands, however, given the Council's relationship with Providence, she feels that it would be of great value for the Council to have a check-list on where the schools were, what needed to be done, and what was done.

Member Gaines voiced that she has a problem with the number of students being placed in classrooms and that she has heard in more than one occasion that there are classrooms of 30 or more students. She is not aware of any classroom in the state, except a gymnasium, where you can socially distance 30 students.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that there is no classroom in the State of Rhode Island that has 30 kids. The recommendation is that it can go up to 30 students, but no classroom has 30 students, hence why there is a A day and a B day.

Student Representative Brandon Feliz, expressed that he is very disheartened to hear about the state of substitute teaching as substitute teachers work as hard, if not harder, than normal teachers without union benefits. He asked whether RIDE can help with pathways for accelerated certification, and if not, what can be done for substitute teachers. He also voiced that the same individuals come to talk about the same issues month in and month out and we keep dodging their questions and saying that we will keep them updated and we don't. We need to think about formats where we have direct contact with teachers and allow them to share their grievances. The people who suffer the most that the ones who need to have stake in these conversations and we need to start shifting the way we communicate so that people feel like they are being listened to.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that substitute teachers are under a different ranking. She shared that over 1,000 teachers have registered to substitute and RIDE is working to support them.

Board Chair Cottam clarified the role and responsibility of the Council and reminded folks that this is a state-wide Council and that she does not invite people to just come and talk about one district. There have been, and continue to be, many symposiums and forums, particularly in Providence, that the Commissioner has held for teachers, parents, students, to express their concerns.

Commissioner Infante-Green voiced that the Superintendent has met with most of the teachers that spoke this evening and there have been different forums. A lot of the information is available at the district and many of the questions have already been addressed. She is also going to ask the Superintendent to put it all in one document so that there isn't miscommunication.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. RI Education Operations Center (EdOC) – Overview

Dr. Laura Canavan, Captain in the National Guard, Nurse Practitioner, and Director of Outreach and Brian Chianese, Major in the RI National Guard and Deputy Director, presented an overview of EdOC, and Dr. Alexander Scott joined remotely to answer questions.

Major Chianese began by giving a brief overview of the EdOC structure, which morphed from a working group this summer to help with transportation and how to get students safely back to school. Subsequently, the group grew to establish an Operations Center, an interagency effort comprised of staff from the RI National Guard (RING), RI Department of Health (RIDOH), RI Department of Education (RIDE), and Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). It leverages state resources to provide schools the assistance needed to ensure a safe and educational experience for every K-12 student in the state. Under EdOC, there is an Operations section (Daily Operations, Logistics, Data Analysis, and Communications) with a 24 hour support line to address short-term solutions, as well an Outreach section (Training, Assistance Teams, Human Services, and Requests for Information).

Next, Dr. Canavan explained that there are two main efforts within the outreach section – an LEA (Local Education Agency) Assistance Team and a Rapid Response Team. The LEA Assistance Team proactively reaches out to the schools to offer site visits and provides school nurses, teachers, school counselors, etc., the opportunity to share any areas of concerns, and rapid response. The Rapid Response Team responds to various situations at LEAs, such as conducting focused needs assessments, screening processes, resiliency training for staff, education on proper use of PPE, etc.

Member Purtill voiced that there seems to be a real disconnect on contact tracing as teachers allege that they continue to teach two or three periods before they are sent home, while other districts are sending their teachers home right away.

Dr. Alexander-Scott responded that from a science perspective, when someone is a close contact and they are asked to quarantine, the focus is that it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to develop. The general timeframe that it takes for the virus to have transmitted from the individual who was positive to the close contact, takes most of the time, several days to happen, so as long as quarantining occurs within the 24 to 48 hour range, it is acceptable.

Member Callahan asked how districts are being guided with making decisions to close schools when a positive case occurs, as it seems to differ from district to district.

Dr. Alexander-Scott responded that her team is working really hard to be responsive to the consistency by providing the K-12 playbook and the guidance that is on the BacktoSchoolRI website, so that there is a roadmap and people can have as clear an understanding as possible of what the pathway usually is. RIDOH is also very clear about saying that districts need to work with them on an individual basis, regardless of the case, because there are nuances that occur that need to be incorporated into decision-making. EdOC is a valuable partner in ensuring that school leadership have the information that is necessary to follow.

Member Davis asked Dr. Alexander-Scott for an update on the numbers as they relate to students and teachers, and the percentage of students who are in in-person learning versus distance learning.

Dr. Alexander-Scott noted that fortunately, there hasn't been many large clusters of cases and that is a tribute to the hard work of the schools, the partnership with RIDE and the RIDOH, and the effort of everyone involved. When general protocols are followed and structures are in place, it is a path to success in ensuring that we don't experience large outbreaks. There are roughly 320 cases among in-person learners, staff and teachers, overall, spread-out across 172 different

schools throughout the state. For distance learners and adults involved in distance learning, there have been around 230 cases. Transmission is happening more in unstructured environments when folks let their guard down. As far as the actual percentages, Dr. Alexander-Scott did not have that information readily available.

Major Chianese responded that EdOC looks at the numbers that are reported by the districts on a daily basis, and based-off the databases and the portal, the numbers are roughly fairly even between distance learners and in-person learners.

Student Representative Feliz asked if information is available on where cases are more prevalent throughout the state.

Dr. Alexander-Scott responded that in terms of the schools, RIDOH updates the data online every Wednesday showing where cases are happening by municipality. The vast majority of the cases are attributed to informal social type settings, including off-campus gatherings.

b. Charter Schools – New Seats and Requests for Expansion

Stephen Osborn, RIDE's Chief of Innovation, gave an overview of the EnrollRI initiative and RIDE's efforts to provide children and families an improved school enrollment experience and enhanced access to information on charter schools, out-of-district CTE programs, and Advanced Course Network. He also shared information on the increasing demand for charter schools – 20,000 applications (10,000 unique applicants) were submitted this year for 1,900 seats; the enrollment profiles for academic year 2019-2020 for Central Falls (1,520 applications for 240 seats), Pawtucket (2,958 applications for 234 seats), Providence (10,735 applications for 875 seats), and Woonsocket (768 applications for 87 seats); the charter school new seats applications received by RIDE (8 new proposals, the most received in recent years – Excell Academy RI, Medical Preparatory Academy of RI, Nuestro Mundo Public School Charter, Providence Preparatory Charter School, and Wangari Maathai Community School – requesting to serve more than 6,000 children; and the 3 requests for expansion (Achievement First RI – 2,628 students - two K-8 campuses and one 9-12 campus, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College – 228 students grades 9-12, and Segue Institute for Learning – 120 students to add grades K-2 to their existing grades 3-8 model).

c. Recommendation for Fiscal Year 2021 School Building Authority (SBA) COVID-19 Capital Fund Project Priorities

Christine Lopes-Metcalf, Chief Executive Officer of the School Building Authority, reminded the Council that in 2015 when the State lifted the school construction moratorium, the Governor and the General Assembly created the SBA Capital Fund, with two primary functions - provide upfront funding for projects on a priority basis and also provide a one-time limited expenses for the SBA, which includes contracted services. For several years, the Capital Fund received between 10 and 20 million dollars to support projects until fiscal year 2019, when the Statewide School Construction Bond of \$250M was passed. As part of the statewide bond, there was language that provided that no more than five percent of any excess funds from the bond could be transferred over to the SBA Capital Fund. Excess becomes available when a district rejects the offering, the district comes in under budget, their agreement expires, an LEA accepts the offer, but the voters in the local community do not support the bond, which is what happened last fall in Westerly. After the Westerly vote, the SBA Advisory Board met to discuss how excess funds should be used when transferred to the SBA Capital Fund, and the recommendation to the Commissioner was that excess funds should still be used to support one-time limited expenses and that the majority of the funds be used to prioritize capital projects. When Covid hit, it was decided that these excess funds be used for school improvements related to Covid to help supply additional support to purchase materials and critical repairs to facilitate best practices in social distancing. The allocation of \$4M will be distributed to school districts most impacted by Covid as of October 1. Upon Council approval, the recommendation will go to the Rhode Island Health and Educational Building Corporation (RIHEBC) Board, for final approval on November 18.

d. Amendment to Memorandum of Agreement: Providence

Ana Riley, Deputy Commissioner for Instructional Programs, framed the discussion by sharing that the Providence Public School District (PPSD) is requesting approval for amendment to the district's RIDE Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) School Construction from May 2019. RIDE has been working with Superintendent Peters and Mayor Elorza to evaluate the long-term educational programming that will be suitable across the district. This amendment is part of a modified plan to ensure that we are aligning our capital work with the turnaround vision for the district. This plan includes new facilities, addressing urgent safety and structural needs, and improving facilities with student learning in mind.

Dr. Joe da Silva, School Construction Coordinator, Architectural Design Reviewer, shared that this proposal is to amend the Council's approval from May 2019, when the Council approved \$2708M of district-wide warm, safe and dry work. This is a redistribution of funds with no cost increase that will essentially fund two important elements – swing space at the vacant Windmill Elementary School and complete replacement of the Frank Spaziano Elementary School.

e. Student Data Portal Update

In the interest of time, Chair Cottam asked for a motion to move Discussion Item 5e - Student Data Portal Update, until the next meeting of the Council.

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move the Student Data Portal Update until the next meeting of the Council

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of Charter School Requests for Extension and Renewal

a1. Beacon Charter School

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to extend the charter of Beacon Charter School, expiring at the end of school year 2022-2023

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

a2. Highlander Charter School

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 moves to extend the charter of Highlander Charter
School, expiring at the end of school year 2022-2023

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

a3. Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College

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 move to renew the charter of Rhode Island Nurses
Institute Middle College for 2 years, expiring at the end of
school year 2022-2023

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

a4. Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education move to extend the charter of Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, expiring at the end of school year 2022-2023

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Approval of the Capital Budget – Fiscal Year 2022-2026

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education formally approves the Fiscal Year 2022-2026 Capital Budget Request, as presented. We further approve its transmission to the Rhode Island Board of Education, for final approval

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Approval of the Fiscal Year 2021 Revised and Fiscal Year 2022 Current Service Level Budgets

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 formally approves and transmits the Fiscal Year 2021 Revised and Fiscal Year 2022 Current Service Level Budgets to the Rhode Island State Budget Office. We further approve their transmission to the Rhode Island Board of Education, for final approval

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

d. Approval of Amendment to Memorandum of Agreement: Providence Public School District

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

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the amendment to the May 14, 2019 project approval of \$278,430,300 to reallocate the funding, as presented

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6. ADJOURNMENT:

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

VOTED: That the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.