



MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
December 16, 2021

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Board Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the December 16, 2021, meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and noted that virtual access was provided to the public. Chair Cottam declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**Present:** Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

**Absent:** \*Milly Asherov, Amy Beretta, Karen Davis, and Jo Eva Gaines

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

Chair Cottam noted for the record that Members Beretta, Davis, Gaines, and Commissioner Infante-Green, would not be joining the meeting.

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

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 accepts the agenda for the December 16, 2021, meeting

Vote: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

[Member DiCenso arrived after the acceptance of the agenda]

**2. OPEN FORUM**

Four individuals addressed the Council.

**3. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- a. School Building Authority Necessity of School Construction Applications and Pay-As-You-Go Awards
  - 3a1 – Achievement First Charter School
  - 3a2 – Johnston School Department
  - 3a3 – Portsmouth School Department

Victor Capellan, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner, began by stressing that facilities matter as school age children spend more time in schools than in any other building aside from their homes, therefore, the schools they attend should be safe, clean, and well equipped. Building conditions are also important to the Council's core mission: Ensuring that all students achieve at the high levels needed to lead fulfilling and productive lives, to succeed in academic and employment settings, and to contribute to society. He reminded Council Members that one of the many responsibilities of the Council is to consider projects that have completed the multi-stage Necessity of School Construction process, which provides approved projects access to School Construction Aid (Housing Aid, PayGo and/or Capital Fund) for their projects. He explained that during Stage I, LEAs are tasked with identifying their needs, including analyzing existing building conditions, reviewing enrollment projections, and assessing their educational programs. As part of Stage II, LEA's work with their education planners, architects, and engineers to create solutions to those needs. The most educationally sound and fiscally prudent solutions are reviewed by the SBA and advanced to the Council if applications comply with the School Construction Regulations. The three LEAs before the Council this evening, have completed this multi-stage process and seek approval.

Next, Mario Carreno, School Building Authority Director, went over the local process that each plan went through, to ensure that locally, all stakeholders are on board with providing a safe and healthy facility for their students.

Council Members asked, that different than Johnston and Portsmouth, where does the money that is not the state share come from for Achievement First and who owns the building. Also, if something were to happen to Achievement First and the State has invested public dollars, what happens to that building that is owned by a private entity.

Director Carreno explained that Achievement First has two pots of money and that the school plans to bond \$64M through RI Health and Education Building Corporation. So, unlike the traditional municipalities, where the voters back that bond and if something were to happen, the voters are left on the hook, in the case of Achievement First, it is the Charter Network that is left on the hook if something were to happen. There is no commitment to any Rhode Island resident, if something were to happen to the project and the majority of this funding is Housing Aid, so in this scenario, the State would immediately stop any remaining payments. Additionally, both the School Construction Regulations and the Statute have provisions that allow the State to go back and recapture portions that were paid. He shared that RIDE has been working with the Auditor General in the case of the ACE Charter School, which closed in 2020, to seek legislation in the coming session to have all assets go back to the sending communities that generated the funds.

#### **4. ACTION ITEMS:**

##### **a. Charter School Renewals**

4a1 - Blackstone Academy Charter School

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of Blackstone Academy Charter School for three years, beginning with school year 2022-2023 and expiring at the end of school year 2024-2025. Blackstone Academy School holds the opportunity for an earned five-year renewal.

Under an earned five-year renewal, charter terms automatically extend to a five-year term (school-year 2022-2023 to school year 2026-2027), if the charter receives 3-stars or higher on RIDE's accountability system by the end of school year 2023-2024, then a three-year renewal recommendation becomes final.

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

#### 4a2 – SouthSide Elementary Charter School

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of SouthSide Elementary Charter School for three years, beginning with school year 2022-2023 and expiring at the end of school year 2024-2025. SouthSide Elementary Charter School holds the opportunity for an earned five-year renewal.

Under an earned five-year renewal, charter terms automatically extend to a five-year term (school-year 2022-2023 to school year 2026-2027), if the charter receives 3-stars or higher on RIDE's accountability system by the end of school year 2023-2024, then a three-year renewal recommendation becomes final.

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

4a3 – The Compass School

On a motion duly made by Patricia DiCenso and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to renew the charter of The Compass School for three years, beginning with school year 2022-2023 and expiring at the end of school year 2024-2025. The Compass School holds the opportunity for an earned five-year renewal.

Under an earned five-year renewal, charter terms automatically extend to a five-year term (school-year 2022-2023 to school year 2026-2027), if the charter receives 3-stars or higher on RIDE’s accountability system by the end of school year 2023-2024, then a three-year renewal recommendation becomes final.

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Approval of the SBA Necessity of School Construction Applications and Pay-As-You-Go Awards

4b1 – Achievement First Charter School

On a motion duly made by Patricia DiCenso and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Achievement First Charter School’s Necessity of School Construction Projects totaling \$76,500,000, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §16-7-41.1.

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative, 2 members voted in the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez

NAYS: 2 - Colleen Callahan and Lawrence Purtill

ABSTAINS: 0

4b2 – Johnston School Department

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

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Johnston School Department's Necessity of School Construction Projects totaling \$215,000,000, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §16-7-41.1.

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

4b3 – Portsmouth School Department

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the Portsmouth School Department's Necessity of School Construction Projects totaling \$21,439,299, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §16-7-41.1.

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso, Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**6. ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion duly made by Patricia DiCenso and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was

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

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

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Patricia DiCenso,  
Marta Martinez, and Lawrence Purtil

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.