



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
July 23, 2019

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Board McConaghy, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. He noted for the record that Council Member Field would not be joining the meeting, declared a quorum present, and called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

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

Absent: Amy Beretta
Gara Field

[*Ex-officio, non-voting member]

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

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 agenda for the July 23, 2019, Meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the June 18, 2019, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the June 18, 2019, Meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 1

[Chair McConaghy had to abstain from the vote as he did not attend the June 18, 2019 meeting of the Council]

b. Minutes of the June 25, 2019, Meeting

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the minutes of the June 25, 2019, Meeting

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 1

3. OPEN FORUM

Mayor Elorza and 30 other individuals (parents, students, teachers, community members, and stakeholders) voiced their concerns and views on the dismal progress of the Providence Public School District over the decades, offered their support, and expressed that they want to be involved and be part of the solution going forward.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Times2 STEM Academy Renewal Conditions Deadline Change

Commissioner Infante-Green shared that as reported at the June 18, 2019, Council meeting, the Times2 STEM Academy has gone through some leadership changes since the Council's approval of their charter renewal in January. The school elected a new Board Chair in May, who unfortunately, passed away unexpectedly. Due to that extenuating circumstance, the new Board Chair requested an extension on their first renewal condition (plan submission), but the remaining conditions remain unchanged.

Steve Osborn, RIDE's Chief of Innovation, shared that the Charter team has worked closely with the school and identified August 9, 2019, as the best timeline for submission of their plan.

- b.** Presentation and Discussion regarding the Commissioner's request to the Council for delegated power and authority to take actions with respect to the Providence School District

Commissioner Infante-Green began her presentation by sharing the many different emotions - from angry, to hurtful, to hopeful, back to hurt, and ended determined - that she experienced throughout the public forums. She expressed that she agrees with the many things that were shared during the forums as well as this evening, and that education saved her life. She know firsthand what it is like to receive public assistance, to have parents who do not speak English, to come home and not have someone who is able to help you with your homework, but she also knows what it is to have a teacher who cares about you and makes sure that you not only achieve, but that you excel. She knows what the possibilities are and that no one is going to tell her that the children of Rhode Island cannot do that and more.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green went over a PowerPoint presentation on what she has learned since arriving in Rhode Island, why her recommendation to the Council is so important, and that everyone leaves this room understanding what it all means. She underscored the fact that only 14% of Providence students are performing at or about grade level in English Language Arts and only 10% in mathematics. She stressed that we have failed an entire generation and made it very clear that she is not a politician, doesn't care about contracts or vendors; she cares about children.

Commissioner Infante-Green gave an overview of the Johns Hopkins review process and the key themes from the report and the nine public community forums, which included two in Spanish and were attended by over 1000 attendees:

- Low level of academic expectations;
- Parents feel powerless
- Teachers and staff are demoralized and disenfranchised;
- Principals and school leaders have no authority;
- Schools are unsafe and crumbling all across the city;
- Poor school culture negatively impacts everyone;
- System governance gets in the way of student outcomes

Commissioner Infante-Green reiterated that this is about kids and she does not want to hear about what is good for adults, which comes secondary. She invited Naiem, an 11 year old student who had attended one of the public forums, to join her at the podium. Naiem spoke about the condition of his school and expressed that if these schools were a home, a restaurant

or even a prison, there would have been a public outcry many years ago and things would have immediately changed. He spoke of the lack of quality programs and instructional materials, teachers not believing in the students and not pushing them to reach their full potential, and how students, teachers, principals, and parents, should not have to beg for a good education or a safe place to work and learn. He ended by stating that “everyone always says the children are the future, but what future do we have if we have no education?”

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green went over the legal process under the Crowley Act (R.I.G.L. 16-7.1-5), which authorizes RIDE to take control over failing schools and school districts, and the Council to reconstitute schools within the district, if needed. According to the Crowley Act, RIDE shall exercise progressive levels of control “over the school and/or district budget, program, and/or personnel.” The Council’s reconstitution responsibilities “may range from restructuring the school’s governance, budget, program, personnel, and/or may include decisions regarding the continued operation of the school.” Following delegation of authority to the Commissioner, she will prepare a draft proposal for Decision and Order exercising control of the Providence Public School District under R.I.G.L. 16-7.5-1 and an order to show cause as to why that preliminary order should not become final. The document will be given to the Mayor of Providence, the School Board, the Acting Superintendent, and the City Council. They will be given a 30-day period to notify the Commissioner if they intend to present evidence (witnesses and/or documents) at a show cause hearing. After the show cause hearing, the Commissioner will issue a final order, based on the evidence presented. For the next 90 days, RIDE will follow the legal process to assume control of Providence public schools. Until a final Decision and Order is entered, the Providence Public School District will remain under its current governance structure. The Acting Superintendent along with members of the Providence School Board and the city will work together to prepare for the first day of school on September 3. RIDE has communicated its expectations to the Providence Public School District that schools open as safe and supported learning environments for students and the Commissioner will hold the city and the district accountable to ensure that it happens.

Member Purtill asked what the Interim Superintendent and Providence is doing on the conditions of those building as the new school year fast approaches.

Commissioner Infante-Green responded that RIDE will be meeting with Providence to see where they are and how they will be opening up schools, and she has faith in Dr. Gallo, who is a seasoned Superintendent, in the opening of schools. The city has also committed to taking care of the facilities on things that need to be done. Once RIDE receives a report from them, it will be shared widely.

Member Callahan, also shared her concern with the opening of school and the condition of the buildings and recommended that RIDE do an audit on the condition of each of the schools. She expressed that she too is hopeful and that if we can look at this as an opportunity to finally move on many of the issues that many people of been calling on things that need to be addressed, this will be a very important moment in time. She also asked how the Commissioner envisions including all of the stakeholders, and if there is a plan for the transition between the Interim Superintendent and the State Superintendent.

Commissioner Infante-Green replied that the plan will be developed with input from many different stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, who want to do the work. As far as a transition between superintendents, they will be working together to ensure a smooth and seamless transition.

Lauren Griffiths, Student Representative, that it has been absolutely heartbreaking to see how different the education that she receives as a student of the Portsmouth School Department is compared to the education that Providence students receive. These are students' lives and their whole future is dependent on the quality of education that they receive.

Member Martinez expressed that this is the first time in the six years that she has been sitting on this Council that she witnessed how comfortable folks were to provide testimony in Spanish, which is a reflection of the fact that the community feels welcome.

Member Gaines voiced that she has never seen this level of parent participation, which tells her that parents have had enough. Whenever there is a crisis, there is an opportunity and if we blow this, we should just walk off the face of the earth.

In closing, Board Chair Cottam shared that she felt many of the same feelings – the highs and the lows, the sadness. She thinks that today is the beginning of a new chapter and a moment that we act to lead change that is lasting. It is pivotal that we enter this period with optimism and hope for our children's future, for the Providence School System, and for our State. It is pivotal that we too drive this change with resolve, to remain focused on our goal through what is going to be some challenging times. We all need to approach our decisions through the eyes of our students in this long-term commitment to our students and our State.

Member Davis thanked all of the students who raised their voices. She expressed that the symbol of our State is an anchor and that anchor symbolizes hope. She hopes that students leave here tonight with hope and that we have to believe that we can do this for you and that everyone in this room believes that we can get this done this time. We have to have hope.

5. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Approval of the Times2 STEM Renewal Conditions Deadline Change

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 move to amend the renewal of the Charter of Times2 STEM Academy for three (3) years, with sustainability condition #1 deadline change from June 30, 2019, to August 9, 2019, as presented.

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

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

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

b. Approval of the Commissioner’s request for delegated power and authority to take actions with respect to the Providence Public School District

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 pursuant to its powers under R.I.G.L. §16-60-6 and, specifically, its power to assign the Commissioner certain duties, delegate to the Commissioner the Council’s power and authority to take actions consistent with, and in furtherance of, RIDE’s intervention in and support of the Providence Public School District, which would include, but not be limited to, assuming control of the District, the reconstitution of the Providence Public Schools and any other power (at law and in equity) available to the Council as may be authorized by law and as may be determined to be necessary and appropriate by the Commissioner.

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

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

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Approval of the Fiscal Year 2021 Capital Budget

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Karen Davis, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Capital Budget, as presented

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

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

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

d. Approval of the Proposed Revisions to the Regulations on Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Programs

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 proposed revisions to the Regulations on Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Programs , as presented

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

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

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

e. Approval of the Proposed Changes to Certification Tests

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Lawrence Purtill, it was

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the ETS School Leader Licensure Assessment (6990) with a cut-score of 151 and the ETS Chinese (Mandarin): World Language (5665) with a cut-score of 164.

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

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

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

f. Approval of the Proposed Certification Expiration Date Change

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 approve the expiration date change to make it July 31 for all certificates issued beginning January 1, 2020.

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

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

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

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 adjourns.

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

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

YEAS: 7

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0