



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

January 13, 2016

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on January 13 at 5 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee chamber, Roxbury, Massachusetts. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O’Neill; Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael Loconto; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Jeri Robinson; and Regina Robinson.

School Committee Members Absent: Dr. Miren Uriarte and student representative Savina Tapia.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

School Committee Meeting Minutes: December 17, 2015 and January 4, 2016

Grants for Approval Totaling \$1,714,127:

- BPS Department of Adult Education - \$2,627
- Boston Marathon Bombing Behavioral Response Plan - \$1,636,500
- Strategic Support to Specific Underperforming Schools: Bridge Grant - \$75,000

International Travel Request: Boston Latin School: Ecuador, February 14-22, 2016

International Travel Request: John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science: China, February 11-19, 2016

Behavioral Emergency: Update of Physical Restraint Policy

McKinsey Report – BPS Operational Review

Feeder Relationship for Lee Academy and Young Achievers

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. O’Neill led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. O'Neill announced that the Committee would adjourn to executive session to discuss collective bargaining strategy related to the Boston Teachers Union and United Steelworkers of America, Local 8751. He explained that having the discussion in an open meeting could have a detrimental effect on the Committee's bargaining position. He added the Committee would return to public session at approximately 6 p.m.

Approved – By roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to executive session.

The Committee returned to public session at 6:10 p.m. Mr. O'Neill welcomed new Committee member Alexandra Oliver-Davila, who was sworn in by Mayor Walsh on January 4th, and congratulated Dr. Miren Uriarte who was reappointed to a full four-year term.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the December 17, 2015 and January 4, 2016 School Committee meetings.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Boston Public Schools and the City of Boston continue to celebrate and benefit from an incredible commitment to public education by investing more per pupil than most of its large urban counterparts. Despite declining federal revenue and net state aid for education, the City of Boston has continued to step up. This year's budget appropriation of \$1.027 billion represents the largest appropriation by the City in the history of BPS.

However, the reality is that rising expenses are outpacing current revenue sources. Despite this, the Superintendent is confident that Boston Public Schools will continue investing in key strategic initiatives to close achievement gaps and ensure equity throughout the system. Central office and school leaders have been working collaboratively and vigorously to make strategic budget decisions.

Debates about school budgets can get visceral, with accusations being flung one way or another. In the same spirit as President Obama, the Superintendent envisions Boston's future filled with opportunities that are in reach for all of our youth, having every graduate prepared for college, career, and life. It will only happen, however, if we all work together. It will only happen if we can have rational, constructive debates.

This past Monday, BPS principals and headmasters met with Mayor Martin J. Walsh in the School Committee chamber to seek his partnership during the budgeting process. School leaders spoke eloquently and respectfully about their challenges, yet lifted the conversation above rhetoric to one that sought collective problem solving. Mayor Walsh listened and, as always, pledged his support to BPS and said that through leadership and discipline, the district will enter our future years of budget discussions in a better place.

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The Superintendent expressed optimism that his finance team will bring forth a balanced budget to the School Committee on February 3 so that public conversations can begin about important issues that will affect FY 2017. With the guidance of this School Committee and the partnership of the City, the Superintendent is confident that the final budget will make the City of Boston proud of how we invest in the education of Boston youth.

The reality of this budget season, like the last few years, underscores the importance of long-term financial planning. Only through long term planning and bold changes will the district be able to get to a sustainable trajectory that can support innovation and investment for all students. Long-term financial planning is one of the projects in the 100-Day Plan and the Superintendent's team looks forward to sharing its accomplishments in the first 100 days at the next School Committee meeting.

The Superintendent then highlighted the following "bright spots:"

- Round One of student registration is continuing now through January 29th.
- Boston International Newcomers Academy student Betiel Bhamé will join three other Boston students and the Boston Poet Laureate, Danielle George, to write an original poem, "Imagine Boston 2030" which the students will recite at the Mayor's State of the City address next week.
- Ten students from the Jeremiah E. Burke High School have been awarded registration grants to attend the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) 42nd Annual Convention in Boston on March 23-27, 2016 by the local professional chapter.
- The Hernández K-8 School is using a \$25,000 grant from Verizon to expand robotics for their Ingenieros del futuro / Future Engineers program, which is being used to address disparities around access to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). The Superintendent thanked Verizon for the grant, as well as the Latino STEM Alliance for helping to facilitate the grant.
- A Parent Leadership Conference co-sponsored by the BPS Office of Engagement and the Citywide Parent Council will be held on February 27, 2016 at the Bolling Building. Novice and emerging parent leaders will gain valuable knowledge that will strengthen their skills and ability to actively serve in their role as parent leader in schools.
- On January 4th, volunteers were at the McCormack Middle School in Dorchester prepare the school's new library for students, shelving 1,500 new books, hanging art, and assembling furniture in the new library space. Staff and students did an amazing job raising \$20,000 to fund books and other supplies for students over the past year.

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- The Superintendent thanked the McCormack Middle School team, Laura Bush Foundation, Donors Choose, Willow Tree Fund, and Mission Continues for their support. Volunteers from City Year and Citizen Schools also helped in the effort.

The School Committee approved the Superintendent's Report by unanimous consent.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Heshan Berents-Weeramuni, co-chair, Citywide Parent Council, testified regarding the FY 17 budget and in relation to the district's current achievement gap policy.

Bernadine Lormilus, teacher, Winthrop Elementary School and member, NAACP Education Committee, testified regarding AWC expansion.

Barbara Rosa, parent, Snowden International High School at Copley, testified regarding proposed budget reductions.

Mira Brown, parent, Boston Latin Academy, and teacher, Boston Community Leadership Academy, testified regarding proposed budget reductions.

Kenny Jarvis, parent, Boston Latin School and the Roger Clap Innovation School, testified regarding proposed budget reductions.

Brian Murphy, parent and member, Young Achievers K-8 School Site Council, testified regarding proposed budget cuts.

Johnny McInnis, president, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM), testified regarding the alignment of FY17 budget with the district's achievement gap policy and other budget concerns.

ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Coleman thanked the district for providing the Committee with an FY15 grant outcomes report. He requested additional information regarding consequences for staff that did not report or meet goals.

At the request of Mr. O'Neill, Marta Gredler, project director, explained that the Boston Marathon Bombing Behavioral Response Plan grant will provide intensive interventions for students in high need schools who have experienced trauma and help them build resiliency.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee approved grants for approval in the amount of \$1,714,127.

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Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee approved international travel request for students and chaperones from Boston Latin School to travel to Ecuador from February 14-22, 2016.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the Committee approved an international travel request for students and chaperones from the John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science to travel to China from February 11-19, 2016.

Following a brief discussion, the Superintendent accepted the following additional modifications to the policy based on School Committee feedback: “Schools will convene a team to review the student’s intervention plan if there are ongoing behavioral concerns;” and “the parent can request a meeting to review the student’s intervention plan. The school Student Support Team or a subset of this team can be convened to review the needs and interventions for this student.”

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Updated Physical Restraint Policy.

REPORTS

Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Update – Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Co-chairs Jeri Robinson, Sam Acevedo and Ayele Shakur presented update of the group’s work to date. The co-chairs were joined by Dr. Colin Rose, Assistant Superintendent of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps. The OAG Task Force is comprised of 19 diverse members representing students, parents, teachers, community organizations, experts and other stakeholders. Since September 2015, the Task Force has been meeting regularly to analyze and revise the district’s current achievement gap policy, which has not been updated since 2006. The Task Force has reached five preliminary findings: focus on implementation; set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals; address underlying root causes; go beyond academics; share a clear and cohesive vision.

Moving forward, the Task Force and Dr. Rose will work in tandem with key district leaders to draft the revised policy before bringing it to the School Committee for a vote this spring. The Task Force will then continue to operate as a monitoring body. The public can learn more about the work of the Task Force and provide feedback by visiting www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps.

School Committee members praised the Task Force for their diligent work thus far and for its sense of urgency around this critical issue. Several members thanked former School Committee Chair Rev. Gregory G. Groover for his focus on closing opportunity and achievement gaps, paving the way for the creation of the Task Force.

Mt. O’Neill expressed optimism that the work of the Task Force will have a significant impact on closing gaps and said all district staff must feel a sense of ownership about this work. He added that while the issue is a national problem, Boston must be a leader. The Superintendent explained that all of his work is guided by an equity lens.

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McKinsey Report: Boston Public Schools Operational Review – Eleanor Laurans, executive director of school finance, presented a high-level summary of the BPS Operational Overview conducted by management consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Commissioned by Mayor Walsh as part of a series of city department audits, the report identifies possible opportunities to explore for more efficient operational approaches and suggests reallocating potential cost savings to better serve all students in the system.

The report consists of four sets of recommendations:

1. Opportunity to consolidate schools
2. Opportunity to revisit and potentially accelerate special education reforms
3. Opportunity to reorganize central office and non-teaching staff
4. Opportunities to improve operations

Ms. Laurans explained that the audit is not intended to provide formal recommendations but to provide suggestions about opportunities available to BPS. Additional, targeted analysis would be required to confirm specific opportunities, as well as public engagement and strategic evaluations to weigh the costs and benefits of the different options. The audit recognizes that a closer analysis will be needed to determine what changes are appropriate. BPS has already taken steps to engage in an additional analysis focused strictly on special education services. This supplemental review, currently underway, will provide a more detailed understanding of district and school-based practices, and provide recommendations for reform. Ms. Laurans noted that long-term financial planning is underway and said she welcomes all ideas as we collectively strive to maximize resources

Moving forward, an advisory committee convened by Superintendent Chang, which includes community, business, and school leaders, are expected to share recommendations for comprehensive financial reforms by mid-2016, in alignment with the district's long-term strategic plan. Additionally, several groups who worked on initiatives for the 100-Day Plan will release findings to the Boston School Committee this winter.

The report is available online at http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib07/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/4/BPS%20Operational%20Review_PPT.pdf

Mr. Loconto suggested that as the district rules out moving forward with certain recommendations outlined in the McKinsey Report, it should publicly share that information to build trust with the community. Mr. O'Neill explained that he thinks about the report as a theoretical financial exercise, adding that financial implications are just one aspect of the decisions made by the Committee.

Feeder Relationship for Lee Academy and Young Achievers – Assistant Superintendent for Operations Kim Rice and Principal Leader Kelly Hung presented the Superintendent's proposal to convert Lee Academy to a K-3 school over the course of the next two school years and maintain the feeder relationship with Young Achievers, which would remain a K-8 school. Ms.

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Rice explained that if the district does not modify the enrollment patterns at Lee Academy (LA) and Young Achievers (YA), current first grade students at LA will not be able to move together as a cohort in school year 2016-17 due to lack of physical space at YA. Both school principals and their communities strongly support the proposal. The presenters also noted similarities between the schools, both of which are pilot schools with inclusion.

Committee members asked questions about curriculum, facilities improvements and other options explored by the district, all of which were answered by the presenters. Ms. Jeri Robinson requested data on the number of Lee Academy students who choose to attend Young Achievers. Ms. Regina Robinson urged LA and YA school leaders to follow up with parents who did not the support proposal to educate them about the benefits of the plan.

The Committee is scheduled to vote on the Superintendent's recommendation on January 27th.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

The following people testified in favor of the proposal to modify the feeder relationship between Lee Academy and Young Achievers K-8 School:

- Amelia Gorman, principal, Lee Academy
- James Knauer, parent, Lee Academy
- Chima Ikonne, parent, Lee Academy
- Christina Grayson, teacher, Lee Academy
- Colleen Mason, teacher, Lee Academy
- Carlo Tomilson, parent, Lee Academy

John Mudd, advocate, testified regarding the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Update.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. O'Neill committed to working with the Citywide Parents Council to advocate for more state funding for BPS, adding that they will organize a "Day on the Hill" in February. He also said that he plans to testify against the MBTA's proposal to dramatically raise the price of student T passes. He and Ms. Oliver-Dávila encouraged people, especially students, to speak out at the MBTA's upcoming public hearings. For dates, visit http://www.mbta.com/uploadedfiles/Meeting/MBTA_PublicMeetingCalendar_Eng.pdf

ADJOURN

At approximately 8:58 p.m., the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting.

School Committee Meeting
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
School Committee Chamber

January 13, 2016

Attest:

Elizabeth Sullivan

Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary