

## **OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**November 2, 2016**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on November 2, 2016 at 5:30 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](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

### **ATTENDANCE PRIOR TO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael Loconto; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; and Dr. Miren Uriarte.

School Committee Members Absent: Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; and student representative Keondre McClay.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Long-term Financial Plan: Investing in Student Success

Build BPS Ten Year Educational and Facilities Plan: Draft Demographics Advisory Committee Report and Power Point

Mattahunt School Proposal Power Point

Mattahunt Proposal Overview

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. O'Neill led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order. He announced that the Committee would adjourn to executive session to discuss collective bargaining strategy relative to the Boston School Police Superior Officer Federation and the Boston School Police Patrolmen's Association. To have this discussion in an open meeting could have a detrimental effect on the Committee's bargaining position. The Committee will return to public session.

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## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

*Approved* – By roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn to executive session.

The Committee returned to public session at approximately 6 p.m.

## **ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael D. O’Neill; Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael Loconto; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Regina Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Keondre McClay.

School Committee Member Absent: Jeri Robinson.

## **CITATIONS**

The Committee and Superintendent presented citations from Mayor Walsh to the following winners of the 2016 BPS Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month Art Contest:

- Elementary School – Leandra Bautista, Grade 5, Hurley K-8 School
- Middle School – Janelys Rodriguez, Grade 8, Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- High School /Alternative School – Bianca Melgar, Elva Ramirez, and Haley Smith, Ostiguy High School

## **MEETING MINUTES**

The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the October 26, 2016 School Committee meeting.

## **SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

*\*As prepared for delivery.*

I would like to thank our community partners, as well as the Mayor’s Office of Financial Empowerment, for facilitating events in three of our schools today to teach our youngest students about saving money. At the McKay and Otis schools in East Boston, the East Boston Savings Bank’s mobile van visited those schools and handed out piggy banks to kindergarten students with \$5 inside to encourage students to start saving. There was another event today at the Roosevelt School, where the students got to watch a play by “Miss Money and the Coins,” which was produced by Blue Hills Bank. We also had volunteers from Read Boston reading to students about the importance of financial literacy at the three schools. The Harvard-Kent and Conley elementary schools are also participating in the Children’s Savings Account program, which

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gives families the opportunity to create a long-term savings plan for college, post-secondary education and training. All K2 students at the five schools will have an initial seed deposit set aside for them. Families will be able to save for post-secondary education and training, and will have opportunities to earn incentives along the way. We are excited to work with the Mayor's Office on this great initiative and to hopefully expand it to other BPS schools.

We had a great weekend with our Build BPS Open House here at the Bolling Building this past Saturday and Sunday. This was an event for adults and kids — an opportunity for the Boston community to learn about our educational and facilities vision for the next 10 years and beyond. BPS had the opportunity to listen to the public and collect feedback on their thoughts, opinions, and concerns about BPS and our ongoing plans. Our Office of Engagement collected many surveys that we re-opened based on the School Committee's feedback.

People who attended the Open House got to look at highly visual exhibits on display in the lobby of the Bolling Building that shared the personal stories of current and former students; an overview of our current grade configurations and why we need to reduce the number of configurations students experience; and a timeline for the facilities master plan; among other items. We also had some really compelling roundtable and panel discussions on a variety of important topics, including our long-term financial plan; race and resiliency; equity; innovation; and youth voice. It put a smile on my face to see the many young kids and our students playing and participating in interactive activities at the open house, including robotics activities with LEGO; math and chess tournaments. The most compelling comment came from a BPS alumnus from East Boston who spoke on the STEAM panel on Saturday morning. She said to the group, "Intelligence cannot be standardized." This is exactly the vision for education in BPS – where the identity of every student is affirmed and sustained, where we truly personalize education for all students, and we leverage each student's strengths and motivation to create the educational experience to prepare them for college, career and life.

Last night, I met with the Mattahunt Elementary School community to share with them the plan I am bringing forth to the School Committee tonight. Members of the Mattahunt Elementary School leadership team joined together with many members of the BPS leadership team to preview the plan to create a new school that serves K0 to 1st grade at the current Mattahunt Elementary site. While we will get into more details about the plan later, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the parents, community members and staff that came out last night. It is clear that the community is disappointed and upset. I sense their pain and frustration and empathize with them that the Mattapan community deserves better. Some of them are either here today or watching on TV and they are counting on Boston Public Schools to step up and support them. We will! We must! We need to make some hard decisions in order to ensure that Boston Public Schools continues to operate the school and I will share the foundational plan for the new school. So, I ask that you to hold off on questions until my report later tonight but I wanted to make sure I acknowledge to the parents and community members that attended last night that I heard you.

In many previous SC meetings over the past year as well as countless meetings with school leaders, teachers, and community partners, I have heard many opinions about the more than 20 grade configurations that currently exist in BPS. This has obviously been a key topic in many of

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the discussions about Build BPS. I wanted to take a moment tonight to discuss some of my thoughts of the emerging vision for a school system that is grounded in the concept of a pre-K to 6 and 7-12 school system. BPS currently has more than 20 grade configurations. We should be proud that we have many school options for our parents yet the complex system and the requirements of our choice processes require savviness and persistence to navigate.

It can be seen as incoherent and while the system has been designed to create equity, there are still many opportunity gaps that must be addressed. Overall, BPS must continue to evolve to create a more coherent portfolio of schools that supports parents' efforts to choose schools that make the most sense for their children and the family as a whole while providing all students in BPS the opportunity to learn in an environment that includes academic rigor, support and enrichment opportunities.

We do not just want to arbitrarily reduce the number of grade configurations. We are looking at a number of inter-related issues simultaneously to consider what changes will:

- (1) yield more seats in high-quality schools for our students,
- (2) support more coherence in the progression of students across the preK-12 continuum,
- (3) accommodate our expanded demand for pre-K instruction,
- (4) include and strengthen program quality, specifically in our schools that are physically large enough to be fiscally sustainable, and
- (5) identify which school buildings are in excellent, great, or good shape as is, which will need renovations to get there, and which will need to be closed and/or replaced.

As we prepare for potential reconfigurations, we had asked school leaders to share their ideas and analyze current enrollment trends within the system, all in coordination with the Facilities Master Planning process.

Let me discuss two emerging themes in the conversation. Our remaining traditional 6-8 middle schools (The Edwards, Lilla Frederick, the Irving, the McCormack, and the Timilty) are all fairly large buildings with schools in relatively good shape. (Although, we await final word on that from the Facilities Master Planning work!) These five schools have been experiencing rapid declines in population – largely associated with the recent emphasis on creating K-8 schools in BPS and the expanding charter school sector some of which is focused on the middle grades level. The five middle schools serving grades 6-8 are also experiencing declining achievement outcomes for students. Clearly, rethinking how to better serve the early adolescent students currently within these schools and better utilize these desired spaces are important pieces of our work.

A second example of our team's research efforts to date is our initial exploration into creating more 7-12 or 6-12 schools within our portfolio. We currently have a handful of 6-12 schools, including TechBoston, Boston Green Academy, Dearborn STEM Academy, and Quincy Upper School. We also have some highly successful 7-12 schools.

We are very open to increasing the number of these expanded configurations at our high schools, in part because when well-coordinated efforts are directed to meet the needs of students during

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all phases of adolescence, these schools offer the possibility for more coherent and coordinated pathways to career and college exploration for students and families, alongside meaningful engagement in high quality academic work.

Some of the benefits of a 6-12 or a 7-12 grade configuration include:

- (1) Minimizing transitions,
- (2) Allowing students to access college preparatory core curriculum in middle grades
- (3) Providing opportunities for intervention and acceleration
- (4) Supporting the development strong relationships with students and parents for longer periods of time.

One of our headmasters who has experience in the traditional 9-12 model and the 7-12 models remarked: (1) Minimizing transitions is a huge piece. We get a kid in 7th grade; it allows for better relationships around a student's social emotional learning, academic preparations and knowledge around an individual student learner. (2) Academically, he is a big supporter of this because it allows the school to build and to share a learning profile for a kid all the way up the ladder. (3) Parents are less anxious about school knowing that their son and/or daughter is in the building for an extended time and get to know the school.

In conversation with our high school principals and headmasters over the past five months, more than a dozen have raised their hands to say they are interested in exploring this reconfiguration option because they believe the students their schools serve would benefit. These schools would create coherence and alignment among academic content, work-place visitations, internship experiences, college planning, and career exploration through this innovation. In September, we received 14 letters of interest from current 9-12 head masters who would like to explore transitioning to 7-12 schools.

We are using this upcoming fall to learn from school districts that have moved in this direction and view the move as successful. We have been in touch with the Cincinnati Public Schools and will be sending a team of headmasters and others to visit their high schools in the near future. Mary A. Ronan, Superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools, transitioned her school system from 9-12 high schools to 7-12 high schools. She indicated that this transition provides the time needed to access college-ready curriculum to, "begin high school-level work earlier, gain skills faster in demanding subjects such as math and earn high school credits sooner," and provides more opportunities to provide CTE or career pathway coursework.

These are two areas that resonate with us when we consider how to make MASS CORE and career exploration opportunities available to more of our students. While we want to learn from successful implementation, when contemplating a change it is also important to learn from implementations that are viewed as less than successful. So, in addition to conversations with districts that have made the move from 9-12 to 6-12 or 7-12 and view it as a successful transition, we are also reaching out to learn from schools districts (such as the Cambridge Public Schools and the Indianapolis Public Schools) that made a transition and are now reconsidering the decision. Obviously, we want to learn about the obstacles or outcomes that are driving these

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reconsiderations as well as about the drivers that led to the change in the first place as we consider reconfigurations in Boston.

The fact that we have successful 9-12, 7-12, and 6-12 schools suggests that each of these models is viable here when done well. It also reminds us that while 20+ grade configurations do not provide coherence, neither will limiting ourselves to two or three configurations. We need to learn (from other schools and our own efforts) what we believe will likely work best for our student populations and then create together new and strong opportunities to build equity, coherence and innovation into every BPS classroom.

We are grateful to each person who stepped forward to be the trailblazers for this transformation. We will look to the Education and Facilities Master Plan to help frame some of our next steps, even as we continue our research and learning about promising local and national efforts to strengthening high school, middle school and all of K-12 education. And, we look forward to engaging the entire BPS community as we build and support a portfolio of schools to prepare our students for success in college and career. As always, our guiding values will be equity, coherence and innovation.

Dr. Uriarte requested a written copy of Superintendent's remarks, which he agreed to provide and share publicly. Mr. O'Neill commented that the district's current grade configurations are too varied, yet flexibility is needed to maintain a portfolio of schools.

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

#### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Boston City Councilor Annissa Essaibi George testified regarding grade configurations and residency enforcement.

Latoya Gayle, parent, testified regarding food and nutrition services and the facilities master plan.

Sheena Collier, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, testified regarding the distribution of M7 bus passes.

Tonya Todesco, parent, Boston Arts Academy, testified regarding the distribution of M7 bus passes.

Glorya Wornum, project coordinator, Boston Student Advisory Council, testified regarding the Student Rights App and the equity reporting process.

Naia Wilson, headmaster, New Mission High School, testified in favor of expanding the school's grade configuration to a 7-12 model.

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Nachelle Gordon, teacher, New Mission High School, testified in favor of expanding the school's grade configuration to a 7-12 model.

Dr. Caren Walker Gregory, headmaster, Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, testified in favor of expanding the school's grade configuration to a 7-12 model.

Wanda Marie Dowling, grandmother, Mattahunt Elementary School, said she felt ill and would put her comments in writing.

Jovan Lacet, parent, Mattahunt Elementary School, testified regarding the Superintendent's proposal to reconfigure the current school into an early learning center.

Matt Ennis, former Mattahunt Elementary School staff, testified regarding the Superintendent's proposal to reconfigure the current school into an early learning center.

Lincoln Larmond, resident, testified regarding the Superintendent's proposal to reconfigure the current school into an early learning center.

## REPORTS

***Long-term Financial Plan: Investing in Student Success*** – Chief Financial Officer Eleanor Laurans and Special Assistant Erika Giampietro presented, "Investing in Student Success: 10 Big Ideas to Unlock Resources in Boston Public Schools," a report on the district's financial future which aims to provide transparency, accountability, and efficiency to the BPS long-term financial planning process. The ideas presented in the report were developed by an advisory committee of key stakeholders over the course of the last year.

The 10 big ideas, which could add up to more than \$100 million in savings, are:

1. Reduce long-distance BPS Transportation by Adjusting Student Assignment Policy
2. Adopt State-Mandated Transportation Eligibility Distances
3. Maximize Efficiencies in Transportation
4. Reconfigure the district's footprint (i.e. grade alignment, class sizes, etc.)
5. Examine teacher wages and extended school days
6. Advocate to Change Tenure Law
7. Ensure Appropriate Student Special Education Identification and Administration Support
8. Streamline Central Office
9. Advocate to Realign State Education Formulas
10. Advocate to Give Boston More Flexibility to Modify its Revenue Structure

The Superintendent explained that the ideas presented are conversation starters, not formal recommendations, adding that this is the start of a community conversation. The district will host a series of information sessions over the next several months. For a complete list of dates, visit <http://bostonpublicschools.org/financialplan>. The Superintendent will provide update on the

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public feedback that's received at the February 1<sup>st</sup> School Committee meeting, when he presents his preliminary FY 18 budget recommendation.

Committee members thanked the advisory committee for its work. Mr. Loconto noted that the ideas presented vary, with some being long-term, some subject to collective bargaining, and others being beyond the purview of the School Committee. He also asked about the timeline, which the Superintendent explained will be a multi-year, evolving process. He added that any potential savings from grade reconfigurations is still unknown.

Ms. Regina Robinson requested more details about potential savings in the area of special education. She asked the district to gather parent feedback about the idea by including a survey on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). She added that safety is extremely important for students with special needs.

Dr. Uriarte asked questions about the data, which the district collected and analyzed in collaboration with Education Resource Strategies. She asked the district to be mindful of unintended consequences of potential changes to the student assignment policy and cautioned about the use of language regarding teacher tenure.

Mr. O'Neill noted that none of the 10 big ideas presented received unanimous support from the advisory committee, on which he served, adding that these are healthy conversations to have. He also requested that the district add a student forum to the schedule earlier in the public engagement process.

Mr. McClay cautioned against the district considering the "hub and spoke" transportation system, saying it presented logistical problems for him in his previous school district.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that equity is important and encouraged the district to reach out to parents who are not typically engaged. She also requested information on school-by-school capacity, enrollment, and student-teacher ratios.

Dr. Coleman asked the district to consider addressing the tenure issue in a supervisory role rather than through tenure law, suggesting that effective supervision, management, and coaching may be an effective approach. Mr. Loconto said the School Committee needs to advocate for change. Mr. O'Neill agreed and suggested working with the Citywide Parents Council.

***Build BPS Demographics Advisory Committee Report*** – Chief of Education Rahn Dorsey announced that the Demographics Advisory Committee will partner with Dr. James Jennings, a respected demographer and retired Tufts University professor, to gather demographic projections by race and by neighborhood through 2021.

Alex Pitkin, principal, SMMA, and Carleton Jones, executive director, BPS Capital and Facilities Management, then presented a draft report from the Build BPS Demographics Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee was established to gain insight into the current and potential demographic trends and what impacts those trends might have on the district, and



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to study how demographics and enrollment projections affect the development of the 10-year Facility Master Plan.

The Advisory Committee collaborated with MGT of America and the Boston Planning and Development Agency to gather and analyze data. Historically, the proportion of K-12 students enrolled in BPS has been declining over time because Boston is growing older and fewer children are being born; and charter school growth is impacting BPS' capture rate. While Boston's population is growing, the growth is occurring among older segments of the population, not among younger segments. The Advisory Committee determined that based on historical trends and the patterns of analytical models, BPS's K2-12 population is expected to grow modestly over the next decade.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed concern that the report did not list Mission Hill as a neighborhood of Boston. She also requested disaggregated data by race and ethnicity and asked the district take a closer look at middle school trends.

Dr. Uriarte expressed concern about the "color blindness" of the data presented. She requested projections on immigrant population growth. She disagreed with the Advisory Committee's interpretation of grade 5-9 data, as well as the overall interpretation that the BPS population has declined, saying that she interprets the data as showing stable enrollment. Dr. Uriarte asked the Advisory Committee to make revisions to the report.

O'Neill echoed the request for additional data to help the Committee better understand the assumptions that were made to create the report.

***Mattahunt School Proposal*** – Instructional Superintendent Mary Driscoll, Mattahunt Elementary School Principal Walter Henderson, and Assistant Superintendent of Engagement Monica Roberts presented the Superintendent's proposal to convert Mattahunt Elementary School into an early childhood education center serving students in K0-grade 1 beginning in school year 2017-18.

Earlier this fall, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) placed the Mattahunt into "Level 4 Under Review" status, which means there is a strong chance the school could be placed into state receivership. Despite continued efforts to turn around the Mattahunt, the school has consistently underperformed and it has fallen into the first percentile of elementary schools statewide.

The new school will serve as a model of excellence in early childhood education that will:

- Specialize in providing trauma-sensitive practices;
- Offer culturally and linguistically proficient programming for the Haitian community;
- And provided an extended school day and school year.

Students entering grades 2-5 in September 2017 will be guaranteed a seat in a high performing school and will receive priority at their selected school choices on their home-based list.

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DESE has given the Superintendent until November 16<sup>th</sup> to submit a “decisive plan for significant and dramatic change.” At a meeting with district leaders on November 1<sup>st</sup>, the Mattahunt community asked the district to consider giving students in grades 2-5 priority over siblings in the school choice process. The district is researching the implications of that request.

The Superintendent then presented a document providing an overview of the proposal, including educational and racial equity implications, policy implications, budget impact, and the implications of a yes or no vote by the Committee.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed concern about the neighborhood of Mattapan receiving adequate programs and services. She also requested data on novice and veteran teachers by school and level, and asked for more information about district support for level 3 and level 4 schools. The Superintendent responded that a high-level analysis shows that level 1 and level 2 schools have more novice teachers.

Ms. Regina Robinson lamented the potential disruption to students and asked the district to track the progress of the displaced students. She suggested overriding the home based assignment system for Mattahunt families to provide displaced students with their first choice of schools. She also asked the district to provide social emotional support for families and advocates for a high percentage of parents to serve on the steering committee for the proposed early childhood education center.

Dr. Uriarte expressed support for the creation of a dual language early childhood program at the proposed school. She also asked what interventions BPS can provide for level 3 and 4 schools to prevent such drastic actions in the future. Assistant Superintendent of Strategy Donna Muncey explained that the lowest performing level 3 schools receive additional supports from the district. She said that district will study the impact on other early learning centers in area, as well as feeder patterns, and provide regular updates to the Committee.

Dr. Coleman expressed support for the proposed focus on trauma informed education, saying that it’s critical for the school to have high quality, well trained staff. The Superintendent explained that the district is making an investment in this school and will make it a model for the district.

The Committee is scheduled to vote on the proposal on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

Peggy Wiesenberg, Access to Justice Fellow, testified regarding the Mattahunt School proposal.

Barbara Fields, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, testified regarding the Mattahunt School proposal.

Irlande Plancher, community member, testified regarding the Mattahunt School proposal.

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

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**NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Regina Robinson suggested reconstituting the Inclusion Task Force. Mr. O'Neill asked her to submit in writing the names of potential members for consideration.

**ADJOURN**

At approximately 11:03 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary