



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE RETREAT

September 20, 2018

The Boston School Committee held a retreat on September 20, 2018 at 5 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington Street, School Committee Chamber, second floor, 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 Loconto; Vice Chairperson Dr. Hardin Coleman; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Michael O’Neill; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; and Dr. Miren Uriarte.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Boston School Committee 2018 Agenda Items

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Loconto welcomed Committee members, Interim Superintendent Laura Perille, and members of the public to the retreat. Ms. Perille was joined by Chief of Staff Rob Consalvo, Legal Advisor Carolyn Weisman, Interim Chief Academic Officer Dr. Charles Grandson, Deputy Superintendent of Administration David Murphy, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary and Middle Schools Mary Driscoll, and Press Secretary Dan O’Brien. Mr. Loconto explained that the Committee is holding quarterly public retreats to plan the meeting calendar and discuss pertinent issues in an informal, relaxed atmosphere.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

School Committee Fall 2018 Calendar - Chairperson Loconto facilitated the discussion as members planned meeting agenda topics for the remainder of the calendar year. Members discussed ways to improve the effectiveness of meetings. Dr. Uriarte and Ms. Regina Robinson

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suggested that the Committee receive updates from BPS departments and their corresponding task force or working group on separate dates (e.g. SpedPAC update at one meeting, Office of Special Education presents the district's response a few weeks later.) Ms. Jeri Robinson suggested that Committee increase its focus on academics. When selecting agenda items, Mr. O'Neill encouraged the Committee to maintain focus on student outcomes. He suggested that presentations to the Committee be posted online in advance, so that the Committee can use valuable meeting time to engage in richer discussions and hear from outside experts. Ms. Jeri Robinson suggested that the Committee amend its current practice to that it receives the Superintendent's recommendation, receives community feedback, and vote on certain major policies over the course of three meetings. Ms. Regina Robinson suggested inviting key partners such as the Citywide Parents Council and Inclusion Working Group to make presentations to the Committee.

The Committee agreed that strategies to support off-track youth, achieving equity in the home base student assignment plan, and BuildBPS are major issues facing the district. Chairperson Loconto called for an integrated approach to address these critical issues in tandem. The Committee discussed the next phases of BuildBPS, the district's 10-year facilities master plan, and their collective desire for movement and improved communication.

Interim Superintendent's Overview and Priorities – Ms. Perille discussed the series of listening sessions she held during the summer, meeting with 72 school leaders, as well as central office leaders. Together they discussed preparations for the new school year, response mechanisms, and problem solving. She highlighted the district's implementation of a central office tracking system to resolve operational issues. The district also conducts after-action reviews on an ongoing basis to promote continuous improvement. Ms. Perille praised what she called the unyielding dedication of teachers and staff in opening schools smoothly.

Ms. Perille said that three major themes emerged from the principal listening sessions: the need for improved coordination of communications; the desire for central office to better support the work of schools; and the desire for the work related to academics, teaching and learning, and Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP) to go deeper. Transportation, special education and English Language Learners also emerged as themes. Ms. Perille has continued leading the central office reorganization that began last spring with a focus on differentiated support for school networks. She reviewed key leadership staffing changes, including the appointment of Dr. Charles Grandson as Interim Chief Academic Officer overseeing, David Murphy as Deputy Superintendent of Administration, Monica Roberts as Chief of Engagement and Richard Chang and Tommy Welch supporting high schools. She emphasized that her initial staffing changes focused on promoting from within BPS. Going forward, she will concentrate on diversifying the district's leadership team by recruiting and posting high-level employment opportunities with a particular focus on the Latinx community. Ms. Perille emphasized the need for a transparent and authentic community engagement related to BuildBPS. The district plans to hold small conversations with school communities, faith-based organizations and community-based partners this fall. She plans to present BuildBPS updates at the September 26th and October 17th School Committee meetings, with an additional update likely in December. She

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envisions presenting “decision points” with different implications, which the community can respond to, and plans to ask the Committee to vote on pieces of the Build BPS Plan in chunks.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that she is deeply concerned about lack of Latinos in senior leadership positions. Ms. Perille agreed, calling it a priority. Ms. Regina Robinson encouraged the district to lead a creative BuildBPS community engagement that is empowering for families. Mr. O’Neill said that the Committee and district leaders learned important lessons from the school start time rollout and encouraged the Interim Superintendent to give families something to which they can react. Ms. Perille said that her team plans to provide families with a roadmap and response mechanisms.

Superintendent Search Process – Ms. Perille excused herself from this portion of the discussion. Chairperson Loconto clarified that he is not presenting a formal report, but plans to do so at the September 26th School Committee meeting. He explained that the Committee’s most recent superintendent search will serve as a guide for the current search. He expects that BPS will be in a position to hire the next superintendent in January or February – the peak time for hiring in the superintendent hiring cycle. First, the Committee must appoint search committee. Chairperson Loconto said that the Committee must discuss the value of hiring a search firm, which could assist with administrative purposes, such as background checks, initial vetting, etc. He said that Committee member already belongs to networks that will prove valuable in recruiting talented candidates, citing as an example Mr. O’Neill’s service as a member of the Council of Great City Schools’ Executive Board. The search committee would draft an RFP for a search firm and create job description with input from community around Thanksgiving. A more refined calendar will be presented for discussion at the September 26th School Committee meeting. Committee members suggested that the search committee hold meetings in different languages and varying times to include a broad range of voices.

Mr. O’Neill said it is critically important for the district to have a permanent superintendent in place by the start of the start of next school year, and preferably by next summer. He also emphasized the importance of having a search committee that represents BPS stakeholders.

Dr. Coleman raised the concerns he has heard from some members of the community that it would be difficult to attract the best candidates in an open search because many sitting superintendents prefer to remain anonymous. Ms. Regina Robinson and Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed support for maintaining an open search process.

Mr. O’Neill provided a brief overview of other large urban school districts that are actively engaged in superintendent searches, including Denver, CO and Columbus, OH. He said that Boston is in a good position to attract high-quality candidates. He added that he does not think the Committee should bar Interim Superintendent Perille from applying for the permanent position, although he would like to see someone with experience as a superintendent in the job. Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that while she feels that Ms. Perille is doing a great job, she does not believe she should be permitted to apply for the permanent position. Dr. Coleman suggested that

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the superintendent's job description include language about having "demonstrated competency" working well with City Hall.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, education advocate, commented that more time should be allotted in future retreats for the Committee to discuss weighty issues. He said that having a strong School Committee is critical. He also emphasized the value of hiring a search firm to support the superintendent search.

Sam Tyler, president, Boston Municipal Research Bureau, reminded the Committee that in accordance with state statute, it must receive monthly budget updates from the Chief Financial Officer and asked that those updates be made public. He said that BuildBPS must address excess capacity. He also said that a search firm is crucial to bringing quality candidates and encouraged the Committee to be clear about its vision for the next superintendent.

ADJOURN

Chairperson Loconto expressed the Committee's sadness following the unexpected passing of former BPS Labor Relations Director Karen Glasgow. He noted that the Committee will observe a moment of silence on Karen's memory at the next School Committee meeting.

At approximately 7:50 p.m., the Committee adjourned the retreat.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary