



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

**October 16, 2013**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on October 16, 2013 at 6 p.m. at the Edward Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

For more information about any of the items listed below, please contact the office of the Boston School Committee: [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or 617-635-9014.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Superintendent's Memo: Grant for Approval: Choice Neighborhood Grant - \$90,000  
School Committee Memo: Membership of the School Committee Inclusion Task Force  
Report: School Choice Implementation  
Report: Capital Facility Master Plan Update

### **ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O'Neill; Vice-Chairperson Claudio Martinez; Meg Campbell; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Rev. Gregory G. Groover; and Mary Tamer.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. O'Neill called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. He announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by Boston City TV (Comcast Channel 24 and RCN Channel 13) in cooperation with BNN-TV and would be rebroadcast at a later date.

### **APPROVAL OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

*Approved* – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the October 2, 2013 School Committee meeting.

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## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Today's school bus service was 93.7 percent on-time this morning. Last week, a rogue element in the driver's union sparked a wildcat strike that suspended service for nearly 33,000 families. Since then, BPS's transportation provider, Veolia, has worked hard to fully investigate the incident and prepare to discipline those behind the illegal action, and to fully address to the concerns of the drivers. The Superintendent praised Veolia for its responsiveness not only to students and families but to its employees. He also asked families to keep contingency plans in place as we the district continues to monitor the situation daily.

Earlier today, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative celebrated its 88<sup>th</sup> ribbon cutting at the Higginson-Lewis K-8 School. By the end of the year, this \$20 million initiative will have transformed the schoolyard of every elementary and K-8 school in Boston. Established by Mayor Menino in 1995, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative is one of the largest and longest-running public-private partnerships in the city's history, reaching 30 thousand of students each year and has covering 25 acres of asphalt – an area the size of the Boston Public Garden. The Schoolyard Initiative has installed 75 play structures and now, the funders are asking the community to continue to support schoolyards in the future.

BPS is currently awaiting a decision from Massachusetts Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester regarding Turnaround designation of the Paul A. Dever and the John P. Holland Elementary Schools, which are both under consideration for Level 5. Last week, the Commissioner held meetings in each school and parents, staff and community members were invited to make brief comments. Level 5 status means that a receiver will be appointed. The Superintendent commended the parents and teachers as well as school leaders and staff of both schools for conveying their passion and commitment to serving all children.

Last week, Mayor Menino joined BPS leaders in celebrating the Vertex partnership at the South Boston Education Complex. Vertex is contributing \$1.5 million to help with science labs and partnerships in the Innovation District.

On October 12th, BPS held the fall session of Parent University, now in its 5<sup>th</sup> year. Since 2009, Parent University has helped five thousand parents become partners in their children's education.

October is Connected Educator Month, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, which promotes the use of online networks and social learning tools to help educators collaborate and learn from their colleagues. As a "connected leader," the Superintendent will facilitate a "Twitter Town Hall" on Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup> from 8-9pm.

The Superintendent presented a brief overview of the School Choice Implementation Report and Capital Facility Master Plan Update, noting that tonight's presentations represent the beginning of a conversation the district will have with schools and families. The Superintendent reiterated his commitment to increasing inclusive opportunities, expanding dual-language programs, adding K1 and K0 options, and improving school quality, explaining the *Grow with Boston* plan positions BPS to achieve these goals by working together.

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Rev. Groover noted that he represented the School Committee at the Holland Elementary School's Level 5 meeting with Commissioner Chester and that he was impressed with the passion and commitment of the parents and staff who spoke publicly. Mr. O'Neill added that he was equally impressed with the Dever Elementary School community when he attended its Level 5 meeting. Mr. O'Neill and the Superintendent recently met with the UK Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove during his recent visit to Boston.

The Committee voted by unanimous consent to accept the Superintendent's Report.

## GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Jerry Mogul, executive director, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, testified regarding inclusive learning opportunities.

Tameka Grace, parent, UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester, testified regarding improvements in teaching and learning and school culture.

Catherine Chiu, Director of Guidance, Boston Public Schools, testified regarding the implications that changes to school programming can have on students.

John St. Amand, vice-chair, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, testified regarding special education issues.

Louise Gilmore, parent and Governing Board member, Another Course to College, testified in favor of keeping the school at its current Brighton location.

Ethan d'Ablemont Burnes, principal, and Marvin Mitchell, administrator, Joseph P. Manning Elementary School, testified in favor of expanding the Manning to a K-8 full inclusion school.

## ACTION ITEMS

**Approved** – The School Committee approved by unanimous consent a grant in the amount of \$90,000.

**Approved** – On roll call, the School Committee unanimously approved the membership of the School Committee Inclusion Task Force, co-chaired by Ms. Tamer and Dr. William Henderson.

## REPORTS

**School Choice Implementation** – Chief Operating Officer Kim Rice presented an update on the work underway to successfully implement the Home Based assignment plan approved by Committee in March 2013. The Home Based plan, which goes into effect in the 2014-15 school year, offers families a range of school options, including schools from the top three MCAS tiers, schools within one mile of home, citywide schools and other options. BPS is conducting

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multifaceted outreach campaign to families and community partners that includes information sessions, multi-lingual PSAs and media and an interactive web site [www.DiscoverBPS.org](http://www.DiscoverBPS.org).

School Committee members asked questions about parent compacting, overlays for English Language Learners and students with disabilities, and other aspects of the implementation process, all of which were answered by the Superintendent and his staff. Ms. Campbell requested that the School Committee take a vote on the student assignment handbook being produced by the Superintendent. She also called on the district to use current MCAS data when ranking school quality. Rev. Groover emphasized the need for greater transparency to build trust with families around the new student assignment plan. Dr. Coleman requested data on the assignment process for students in East Boston. Mr. Martinez emphasized the need for accurate enrollment data and projections. At Mr. O'Neill's request, Ms. Rice clarified that the Mission Hill K-8 School will be an assignment option for students who live near the school's current and former locations.

**Capital Facility Master Plan Update** – Carleton Jones, Executive Director for Capital & Facilities Management, presented an update on Volume III of the district's Capital Facility Master Plan, which aligns school space with the Acceleration Agenda and the Home Based student assignment plan. The plan addresses rising enrollment in the early grades as well as surplus space projected in the middle and high school grades. It also enhances predictability and minimizes school transitions. Short-term facilities changes that would take effect in school year 2014-15 will be presented to the School Committee for a vote on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Long-range planning, including the expansion of K-8 options, will be the subject of community meetings over the next several months. The Superintendent will present his final facilities recommendations to the Committee in the spring. Read the plan at <http://bostonpublicschools.org/facilitiesplan>.

School Committee members asked questions about details of the plan and the rationale behind the recommendations, all of which were answered by the Superintendent and Mr. Jones. Mr. O'Neill asked the Superintendent to present the Committee with the financial implications related to the facilities proposal.

The Committee called for a working session on the Capital Facility Master Plan to give members the opportunity to more fully vet the plan prior to the next School Committee meeting on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

Peggy Wiesenberg, former BPS parent, testified regarding the Capital Facility Master Plan Update.

David Epstein, Boston Arts Academy Governing Board member, testified regarding the Capital Facility Master Plan Update.

Mary Battenfeld, BPS parent, testified regarding the School Choice Implementation report.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

Rev. Groover requested an update on the District Charter Compact.

**ADJOURN**

At approximately 9:40 p.m., the School Committee voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn to executive session to discuss strategy for collective bargaining. Mr. O'Neill announced that the Committee would not return to public session.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan  
Executive Secretary