



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

December 5, 2018

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on December 5, 2018 at 6 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 Loconto; Vice Chairperson Dr. Hardin Coleman; Alexandra Oliver-Dávila; Michael O’Neill; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; Dr. Miren Uriarte; and student representative Evelyn Reyes.

School Committee Member Absent: None

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Loconto led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Boston School Committee Meeting Minutes: November 28, 2018

Draft Boston Public Schools Superintendent of Schools Desired Characteristics

United Steelworkers Local 8751 Agreement PowerPoint

United Steelworkers Local 8751 Contract Letters of Agreement A&B

United Steelworkers Local 8751 Letters of Agreement and Supplemental Appropriation Equity Impact Statement

UPK Connector System Update November 2018 PowerPoint
CBO K1/BPS K2 Connector Update Equity Impact Statement

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BuildBPS Update and Action Items PowerPoint

BuildBPS Update and Action Items Equity Impact Statement

BuildBPS Phase II Proposed Facility Plan 2018-2027

Financial Update PowerPoint

BPS Financial Update Equity Impact Statement

CITATION

The School Committee and Interim Superintendent Perille presented a citation to Dr. Miren Uriarte, who is stepping down as a member of the School Committee after nearly four years of service. Committee members thanked Dr. Uriarte for her leadership as co-chair of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force, and praised her commitment to equity and accountability. Dr. Uriarte thanked Mayor Walsh for the opportunity to serve.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approved – The Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the November 28, 2018 Boston School Committee meeting.

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

**As prepared for delivery.*

I'd like to thank all of you for being here tonight. We have some important updates this evening regarding BuildBPS recommendations, which will be our primary focus this evening. We will also provide a mid-year budget update. But first, I'd like to share some highlights from around BPS.

Boston Public Schools kicked off Computer Science Week with Pepper the Robot in an event at The English High School. I'd like to thank Chairperson Loconto for stopping by. Students on the school's award-winning FIRST Robotics Team demonstrated how Pepper can dance, fist-bump, shake hands, and even perform tai chi! I'd like to thank SoftBank Robotics America for their generous contribution of Pepper to our high schools. Computer Science Week is a great way for students to do fun and engaging activities that bring STEM learning alive.

Right now, we're looking at photos from the Tynan Elementary School in South Boston, where you can see students using BeeBot, which is a robot designed for young children. I'd like to thank all the teachers and staff for doing their part to make this week happen, along with English

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High Headmaster Caitlin Murphy, computer science teacher Howard Horner, and the students at English for hosting the kick-off event.

Last weekend, I had a great time watching the student athletes of the Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing participate in the 32nd annual New England Schools for the Deaf Tip-Off Basketball Tournament. This year's tournament was very exciting because it marked the first time it was hosted by the Horace Mann School. The event was held at Emmanuel College, where the students played against teams from three other schools for the deaf. Events like this one are so important for our students with disabilities. It helps them build skills, camaraderie, and sportsmanship that will carry them through their adult lives. I'd like to thank everyone who put this event together to benefit our students.

Mayor Walsh's Enchanted Trolley Tour made a stop here at the Bolling Municipal Building last Saturday to help ring in the holiday season. It's the 23rd annual tour, which is held to bring holiday spirit to children across the city. Several dozen Boston Public Schools students and their families were here to celebrate the season with Mayor Walsh, myself, and other city leaders. Our own marching band from English High School performed at the tree lightings in Jamaica Plain on Saturday as part of the trolley tour.

First, I would like to share some remarks on BuildBPS, specific to our recommendation of closing the West Roxbury Education Complex. You'll receive a formal update about that this evening in a presentation with much greater detail, but I think it's important to provide an overview for the Committee and the public on where we stand since we last met. I want to again acknowledge how incredibly difficult and challenging this process is for our students, families, and staff. It's important to stress that our recommendation to close West Roxbury was brought about after years of deferred maintenance, resulting in a rapid deterioration in the last two years, and the emergency status we find ourselves in today. As recently as August, we were hoping that emergency repairs would result in us not having to close the building, but that just didn't pan out. We did make the decision to inform the students, families, and staff of our recommendation to close West Roxbury and Urban Science academies in mid-October. We would have liked to inform people about this even earlier, however, we wanted to await a final inspection to be absolutely, positively sure that we had no other option but to recommend closure. We are taking lessons from this as we move forward with the phase out of middle schools, beginning with the McCormack, where we are giving folks an 18-month window to plan for transition.

When it comes to West Roxbury, we are at a critical juncture. We have taken each step in this process very carefully and methodically, as we have kept students at the forefront of our work. We truly appreciate and acknowledge that the staff of Urban Science Academy and West Roxbury Academy have kept students at the forefront of our ongoing discussions. We would not bring this recommendation to the School Committee and the public if we saw a different path forward. While we are recommending closure, tonight we will outline our efforts to keep students at the forefront of this transition. This includes keeping rising seniors of both schools together at one location; along with keeping specific special education programs intact; and

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providing priority placement in the student assignment process for rising juniors and seniors, including our English learners and special needs students in general education settings. We will also provide additional social-emotional learning and academic support services to assist all students in effective transitions. Later this evening, my colleagues on the BPS leadership team will provide you greater detail about our plans for students and staff should the School Committee approve our recommendation on December 19th. We do look forward to hearing feedback tonight from the public as we enter the final phase before the School Committee's scheduled vote.

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

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people testified regarding BuildBPS:

- Boston City Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George
- Idalys Calderon, alumna, West Roxbury Academy
- Catari Giglio, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Macklyne Joseph, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Dea Shehu, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Joseph Acquah, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Shakira Pierre, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Shyhein William, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Noah Pierre, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Willie Kincade, student, Urban Science Academy
- Mike Kincade, parent, Urban Science Academy
- Noah White, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Peterly Durosa, student, West Roxbury Education Complex
- Jane Leone, teacher, Urban Science Academy
- Allison Doherty, teacher, Urban Science Academy
- Blanca Burgos, student engagement coordinator, Urban Science Academy
- Tana Becker, teacher, Urban Science Academy
- Christine Langhoff, Dorchester resident and retired educator

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- Jack Sinnott, parent, Urban Science Academy
- Dolores Wood, teacher, West Roxbury Academy
- Gabriel Giglio, parent, West Roxbury Academy
- Michelle Pierre, teacher, West Roxbury Academy
- G. Nadine Jesionek, alumna, West Roxbury High School
- Dr. Edner Cayemie, teacher, West Roxbury Education Complex
- Peggy Wiesenberg, Access to Justice Fellow
- Kerry Richards, policy director, Office of Boston City Councilor Michelle Wu
- Joshua Venter, student, West Roxbury Academy
- Dave Venter, parent, West Roxbury Academy

John Mudd, advocate, testified regarding the superintendent search and thanked Dr. Uriarte for her service.

Danajeon Stewart, parent, Warren-Prescott K-8 School, testified in favor of adding modular units to expand the school's capacity.

Edith Bazile, Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM) and Ruby Reyes, Boston Education Justice Alliance, testified regarding the superintendent search process.

Arianna R. and Matthew Tran, BPS students, testified regarding the Superintendent Search.

ACTION ITEMS

Approved – On roll call, the Committee approved the ratification of letters of agreement A&B between the Boston School Department, the Mayor of the City of Boston, and the United Steelworkers and Local 8751 through June 30, 2022. Mr. O'Neill abstained. All other members voted in favor.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved an FY19 supplemental appropriation request in the amount of \$1,388,154 to cover the cost of the collective bargaining agreement between Transdev and the United Steelworkers Local 8751.

Ms. Jeri Robinson expressed support for the proposed UPK expansion, saying it offers stability for families. Dr. Coleman encouraged the district to track the data and conduct an equity analysis after the rollout.

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Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the expansion of the Universal Pre-K (UPK) Connector system as recommended by the Interim Superintendent.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila, co-chair of the Superintendent Search Committee, presented a brief update on the superintendent search process. The Search Committee received 6 responses to the Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFQ) from search firms. The Search Committee will meet next week to review the proposals and vote on one firm to recommend to the School Committee for approval on December 19. Tomorrow’s listening session with the NAACP has been moved to Freedom House at 5 Crawford Street in Dorchester in order to accommodate more people. The Committee will hold a listening session in Spanish (w/English translation) on December 10 from 6-8 p.m. at the East Boston Social Center co-hosted by the Greater Boston Latino Network and Amplify Latinx. An online survey is available in both English and Spanish at www.bostonpublicschools.org/superintendentsearch.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila presented an updated draft of the superintendent’s job description, which has been reviewed and revised by the Search Committee and informed by feedback received at four community listening sessions and hundreds of survey responses.

Ms. Jeri Robinson suggested replacing “K” with “Pre-K” in the fourth paragraph.

Mr. O’Neill praised the letter about priorities for the next superintendent co-signed by 14 organizations. He suggested adding the word “public” to the phrase “Pre-K-12 education” in the fourth paragraph.

The Committee discussed the similarities and differences between the items outlined in the letter and the job description presented. Ms. Regina Robinson suggested that the language in the letter be added to the job description in its entirety with authors cited. Mr. Loconto and Ms. Oliver-Dávila said that adding the letter in its entirety would result in repetition. The Committee agreed to approve the job description, adding the words, “pre-K” and “public,” and give the Search Committee permission to continue to modify the language of the job description with the stipulation that if substantive changes are made, the Search Committee will present the modified job description to the School Committee for re-approval.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the superintendent job description as amended.

REPORTS

BuildBPS Phase II Update – The Interim Superintendent’s senior team provided the Committee with an update on the BuildBPS process, with a focus on transition plans for students at the West Roxbury Education Complex (WREC). The Interim Superintendent is recommending the closure of the WREC at the end of the 2018-19 school year. Urban Science Academy (USA) and West Roxbury Academy (WRA) would close at the end of the 2018-19 school year for all students

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other than rising seniors, who would be relocated as a cohort for one year. At the end of SY 2019-20, when students graduate, both schools will close. Specific special education programs would be kept intact.

Presenters included Chief of Staff Rob Consalvo, Deputy Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder, Chief Engagement Officer Monica Roberts, Academic Superintendent Dr. Joel Boyd, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Ligia Noriega-Murphy, Assistant Superintendent for the Office of English Language Learners Priya Tahiliani, Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Special Education Cindie Neilson, Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Human Capital Emily Qazilbash, Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Equity Becky Shuster, and Chief of Operations John Hanlon.

The team explained that the key contributing factors for the recommendation are the deteriorated building condition, declining enrollment, and academic performance. In recent weeks, district staff have had multiple conversations with students, families, and staff, we have worked with the staff and students of both schools to plan for a transition that mitigates negative impacts. Rising sophomores and juniors, including English learners and resource room students, will receive prioritized school assignment, transcript review and individualized support.

Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Equity Becky Shuster provided an overview of the district's equity analysis of WREC closure, highlighting key concerns and mitigating factors. She said the equity analysis would be ongoing. As part of the FY20 proposal, BPS plans to propose to the School Committee a \$1M fund to address transition activities to support impacted students.

BPS will return to the School Committee at a later date to discuss the beginning of a citywide community process to determine the future use of the WREC facility. The current recommendation is to rebuild on that site and identify a BPS school to occupy the new building as a BPS 7-12 or 9-12 citywide high school that serves a diverse range of students. The rebuilding process will likely take five to seven years to complete.

Dr. Uriarte expressed concern about the potential impact that the closures could have on English Language Learners (ELLs) who may be reassigned to various schools. Assistant Superintendent of the Office of English Language Learners Priya Tahiliani explained that while impacted ELL students do have choice, they have the option to move as a cohort to Fenway High School or to attend a new multilingual program starting at New Mission High School. Dr. Uriarte requested that the district conduct ongoing monitoring of displaced ELL and off-track students.

Ms. Jeri Robinson discussed the loss of community that is being expressed by the impacted students and staff and shared concerns about the impact of potential closures, saying she is not convinced that closure is the best path forward. Chief Academic Officer Dr. Charles Grandson, a former teacher at the WREC, said that he is comfortable with the commendation. Ms. Qazilbash

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explained that the district will begin impact bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union to discuss teacher continuity after the School Committee vote.

Mr. O'Neill said that while he is comfortable with the recommendation to close the WREC facility due to safety concerns, he remains concerned about the impacted school communities. He requested a list of open seats at alternative education programs, which the presenters agreed to provide. He also requested that the district conduct an analysis of the viability of moving both Urban Science and West Roxbury Academy in their entirety, and asked that the analysis be shared transparently with school communities so that the district can continue to build trust.

Ms. Regina Robinson requested data on the number of rising seniors in specialized programs, the number of students with one-to-one paras, and a profile of high schools with specialized programs. Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Special Education Cindie Neilson agreed to follow up. Ms. Robinson encouraged the district to monitor WREC students and conduct home visits for the chronically absent. She also requested more details on how the \$1 million transition fund will be used. Ms. Perille said the district will follow up.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila expressed concern about the district's communication with WREC schools, saying there appears to be a disconnect. She requested additional information about available alternative education options, and asked how many students would be in cohort of less than five. She suggested elevating ELL strands as a priority, and encouraged district leaders to hold a meeting with impacted Spanish speaking families. Ms. Oliver-Davila also requested regular updates of data sets showing if students are on track.

The Committee is scheduled to vote on the Interim Superintendent's final recommendation regarding WREC on December 19.

Financial Update – Chief Financial Officer Eleanor Laurans provided an update on the financial status of the Boston Public Schools. BPS ended Fiscal Year (FY) 18 with a small surplus, marking the 28th consecutive year that the district ended the year within budget. The district is projected to close FY19 within budget. Ms. Laurans provided a preview of the district's FY20 recommended budget, which will prioritize additional supports for high need students and stability for schools, particularly lower performing schools. The district is working to mitigate the effects of declining enrollment wherever possible. The BPS budget team is developing a new budget website to improve public access and transparency.

Chief Engagement Officer Monica Roberts and Assistant Superintendent of Opportunity Gaps Dr. Colin Rose presented an update on the Opportunity Index (OI), a tool developed by the district last year that is meant to measure student need outside of school. The district has applied the tool through partnership funds. It is not a replacement for Weighted Student Funding (WSF). The district has strengthened the OI this year by adding new variables and changing some existing variables.

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The FY20 budget process begins on February 6, 2019 when the Interim Superintendent presents the district's preliminary FY20 budget recommendation to the School Committee. A series of budget hearings will follow.

Mr. Loconto noted the correlation between the district's 28 years of consecutively balanced budgets with the oversight of the appointed School Committee. Committee members thanked former longtime Chief Financial Officer and Interim Superintendent John McDonough for his sound leadership.

Mr. O'Neill asked the budget team to compare school-level data from last year with this year.

Ms. Oliver-Dávila requested details on partnership funding distribution and suggested controlling for gender. The presenters agreed to follow up.

Ms. Regina Robinson asked for more information about the current partnerships at Urban Science Academy and West Roxbury Academy, as well as the budget for their special education programs. She called for more support from higher education partners, and questioned whether \$1 million is a sufficient amount for a transition fund for USA and WRA.

Dr. Uriarte asked about barriers to collecting data and encouraged constant monitoring of the Opportunity Index to ensure its success.

Ms. Jeri Robinson said that the district needs to continue working to stabilize school budgets.

Dr. Coleman praised the budget team on the second year of declining costs for teachers in suitable professional capacity. He also asked about the enrollment projection process, which Ms. Laurans said the district has made more transparent and predictable.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

Mary Battenfeld, member, Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), thanked the Committee for its serious consideration of the joint letter regarding the superintendent search and offered to assist with continued drafting.

Ruby Reyes, director, Boston Education Justice Alliance, said that the letter co-signed by BEJA is explicit in what its authors are seeking in the next superintendent. She thanked the Committee for requesting more analysis and data on the West Roxbury Education Complex.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

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ADJOURN

At approximately 11:56 p.m., the Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary