



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

February 5, 2014

The Boston School Committee held a meeting on February 5, 2014 at 6 p.m. at the Edward Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, and Boston, Massachusetts.

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

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

School Committee Meeting Minutes: January 29, 2014

International Travel Request: Boston Latin School – China, March 22-30, 2014

International Travel Request: Jeremiah E. Burke High School – Costa Rica, April 11-24, 2014

International Travel Request: Young Achievers Science and Mathematics K-8 Pilot School – Costa Rica, April 16-25, 2014

School Committee Memo: Community Outreach for Strategic Vision Roundtable Discussions, February 5, 2014

Report: Preliminary FY15 Budget Proposal

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O'Neill; Vice-Chairperson Claudio Martinez; Meg Campbell; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Michael Loconto; and Margaret McKenna.

School Committee Members Absent: Rev. Gregory G. Groover; and student representative Ayomide Olumuyiwa.

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. He also noted that School Committee meeting broadcasts are now available in closed captioning.

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Mr. O'Neill explained that the School Committee has a statutory obligation to receive the Superintendent's preliminary budget recommendation by the first Wednesday in February. For that reason, the Committee proceeded to hold the meeting despite the snowy weather conditions. He noted that the budget information will be posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/budget.

APPROVAL OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

The School Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the January 29, 2014 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

The Superintendent expressed regret that he must discuss the school system in terms of dollars or departments, saying it should be a conversation about the district's evolution towards excellence for students. He echoed Mr. Martinez's sentiments that BPS must act with urgency to make changes that will benefit children.

Central office represents just six percent of the district's total budget. BPS has one of the smallest central offices of any urban districts in the nation, and sends more dollars directly to schools through weighted student funding than almost any other big city.

BPS operates under the belief that school leaders and teachers have the most influence on student outcomes. Central office must support our school-based teams and ensure that talented, effective leaders hold these critical positions.

Despite a budget challenge of approximately \$100 million, BPS is committed to increasing school budgets by a total of \$5 million. This increase, however, does not mean that every school will receive more resources. BPS must identify the resources to pay for this elsewhere within the district.

The Superintendent has informed central office staff that BPS cannot guarantee their employment beyond June 30.

The budget challenge represents an opportunity to improve schools by raising equity and accountability, removing redundancies and operating with greater transparency and effectiveness. The Superintendent and his team have identified strategies to reduce the budget gap to \$14 million, down from more than \$100 million. Schools, overall, will receive an increase in funding; most central departments will not.

BPS will continue to invest in technology, dual-language, K-8 schools, inclusion, extended learning time, acceleration academies, re-engagement efforts, and pre-kindergarten.

The preliminary budget recommendation is the first step in a nearly two-month public process that will involve debate, engagement, transparency, modifications and forward motion. The outcome will be a sharper, stronger, more effective school system.

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

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. O'Neill recognized Boston City Councilor Tito Jackson, chair of the Council's Education Committee, and Tim Colby, staff assistant to Councilor Matt O'Malley.

The following people testified regarding the Superintendent's FY 15 preliminary budget recommendation:

Carrie Fletcher, parent, Curley K-8 School
Kacy Hughes, parent, Mendell Elementary School
John Lerner, parent, Mendell Elementary School
Sherri Kiami, parent, Mary Lyon School
Nora Blake, parent, Mary Lyon School
Martina Ryan, parent, Roosevelt K-8 School
Elaine Meehan, parent, Mary Lyon School
Richard Gargiulo Jr., parent, Boston Teachers Union K-8 Pilot School
Carmen Pola, BPS grandparent

ACTION ITEMS

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the School Committee approved by unanimous consent an international travel request for students and chaperones from Boston Latin School to travel to China from March 22-30, 2014.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the School Committee approved by unanimous consent an international travel request for students and chaperones from the Jeremiah E. Burke High School to travel to Costa Rica from April 11-24, 2014.

Approved – As part of the consent calendar, the School Committee approved by unanimous consent an international travel request for students and chaperones from Young Achievers Science and Mathematics K-8 Pilot School to travel to Costa Rica from April 16-25, 2014.

REPORTS

Strategic Planning/Superintendent Search Update – Mr. O'Neill presented a brief update on the Committee's strategic planning process, which is currently in the community engagement phase. To date, nearly 30 organizations have been invited to participate in the Committee's strategic vision roundtable discussion series. Each session is open to the public and features a public comment period. The Committee has received some feedback suggesting that glossary and an introductory or background statement could enhance the strategic vision. The Committee will vote on the final draft of the strategic vision after the community engagement process is complete. For more information, visit the School Committee's Strategic Planning Process page at

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www.bostonpublicschools.org. Comments can also be emailed to strategicvisionfeedback@bostonpublicschools.org.

The School Committee is involved in conversations with Mayor Walsh regarding the establishment of a superintendent search panel and will make an announcement soon.

Preliminary Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Recommendation – Chief Financial Officer Donald Kennedy presented the Superintendent’s preliminary FY15 budget recommendation in the amount of \$973.3 million, a 3.8 percent increase over FY14. He thanked Mayor Martin J. Walsh for increasing the City’s allocation to BPS during this fiscally challenging period. The district faces \$60 million in rising costs and \$32 million in declining state and federal revenue. At the same time, BPS must make strategic investments in key priority areas such as transitioning to Common Core academic standards and new technologies, strengthening the Office of Human Capital, implementing the new Home-based School Choice system, deepening dual language opportunities, and expanding inclusive settings. To close the budget gap, the Superintendent has identified \$55 million in savings through strategic realignments and other cost saving measures. The Superintendent and his team will work over the next several weeks to close the remaining \$14 million budget gap. For full details, please visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/budget.

School Committee members requested several additional pieces of information, including the process of projecting enrollments, a breakdown of central office and school-based budgets, and data on excess capacity and deferred maintenance, which Mr. Kennedy agreed to provide. Ms. Campbell urged the district to think creatively when addressing the budget challenge, suggesting that the grandfathering policy under the new choice plan should be re-examined and excess capacity should be addressed. Mr. Martinez proposed that the City could issue bonds to cover the cost of the district’s deferred maintenance. Mr. O’Neill and Ms. McKenna agreed that BPS could leverage more resources by strengthening institutional advancement.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

John Mudd, education advocate, testified regarding the superintendent search process.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was introduced.

ADJOURN

At 9 p.m., the School Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary