



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

**December 3, 2014**

The Boston School Committee held a meeting at 6 p.m. on December 3, 2014 at the Edward Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, Boston, 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.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Minutes of the November 19, 2014 School Committee Meeting

Minutes of the November 19, 2014 School Committee Strategic Planning Workshop

Grant for Approval: HSE Test Center Grant (Fund 280) - \$6,146.

Report: Fiscal Years 2014-16 Budget Update

Report: Boston Education Development Foundation (BEDF) Update

Report: Facilities Master Plan Update

### **ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O'Neill; Vice-Chairperson Claudio Martinez, Meg Campbell; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Rev. Dr. Gregory G. Groover; Michael Loconto; Jeri Robinson; and student representative Ayomide Olumuyiwa.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

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## **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. O'Neill called the meeting to order and announced that the proceedings were being broadcast live by Boston City TV (Comcast Channel 24 and RCN Channel 13) and would be rebroadcast at a later date.

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

The School Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the November 19, 2014 School Committee meeting and strategic planning workshop.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Hayden Frederick-Clarke, a 10th grade math teacher at Charlestown High School, has won a national award from "Facing History and Ourselves." Mr. Frederick-Clarke was selected from more than 400 nominees and 20 finalists as part of a national online voting competition. The award comes with a \$5,000 classroom grant.

BPS teachers throughout the District are leading students in constructive conversations about the events in Ferguson, Missouri. Earlier this week, students in four high schools participated in a national walk-out. Next week, at Charlestown High School, Sung-Joon Pai with the Diploma Plus program is organizing a "walk-in," which will take place after school on December 8. The school will host workshops for students and staff. The goal is to expand the conversation beyond one city or one event, and talk about the larger issues that Ferguson raises in our society, in a healthy and productive way. This is one example of how our school leaders, teachers and staff have taken the lead in conversations about these difficult but important issues.

Tonight the District will present an update on short-and long-range budgeting, including the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 budget status as of October 31. It is common for BPS to see a shortfall of several million dollars at this point in the fiscal year. The current shortfall is estimated to be about \$16 million, which is just short of 2 percent. This is somewhat higher than normal, but the Superintendent believes it can be mitigated. The projected deficit signals that the District needs to tighten controls, identify opportunities to reduce spending and ensure any proposals that require funding be supported by an achievable financial strategy.

The major drivers of these cost pressures are not new. Since this fiscal year began, BPS has been reporting on them individually. The most significant was the decision to keep 7th grade students on yellow buses instead of transitioning to the MBTA. Another significant driver is the new food services contract, which has a high-cost food offering relative to the low federal reimbursement rates the District receives. This decision ensure that students have fresh, healthy, appetizing meals comes at a cost that the District could not anticipate with certainty during the FY15 budget process nearly one year ago.

BPS is also using a conservative approach to estimating costs for its early hiring initiative, as well as added investments at Madison Park as a result of the intervention team recommendations.

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With approximately seven months remaining in the fiscal year, the Superintendent is taking steps now to ensure the District ends the fiscal year in July with a balanced budget. Similar to last year, BPS has placed a freeze on hiring and has implemented a special review process for the release of vacant or to-be-vacated non-classroom positions. BPS staff is working with the city's financial team to explore additional strategies, and expanding its review for expenses that may be offset by external funds.

Such mid-point budget check-ins are necessary for the District to adjust its approach with sufficient time to achieve balance every year. BPS closed its FY14 budget with a net surplus of \$12,000. The District has closed every fiscal year in a balanced position since 1991, and the Superintendent pledged to do the same this year.

BPS Interim Chief Financial Officer Erika Giampietro will provide an additional update on budget projections for FY16. The dynamic is the same as last year, with decreasing state and federal support and increasing costs just to maintain level-service. It is important to begin the conversation now, well before the budget process officially begins, to set expectations and plan in a thoughtful way that continues the focus on supporting all students and eliminating achievement gaps.

Earlier in the year, Mayor Walsh indicated that there would be comprehensive operational audits in major departments across the city. The BPS audit begins this week. The Superintendent looks forward to the recommendations that emerge from this audit, which will help inform the District's budget development process.

Tonight's agenda also includes a report on the Boston Educational Development Foundation. A letter in yesterday's *Boston Globe* signed by members of the Board of Directors outlined some of the changes that have been made to improve oversight, tighten financial controls and increase transparency since 2012. The School Committee took an important step in this direction with its decision to establish revolving funds for transportation, technology and facilities in FY12. Acting Executive Director Jonathan Sproul will outline the steps that have been taken to date as well as future plans. The Superintendent welcomes all suggestions to ensure these dollars are always spent in ways that support students and strengthen schools.

This month, central office staff is working with school leaders to prepare to update data for the Department of Justice (DOJ) about services for English Language Learners (ELLs). The District reached a settlement agreement with the DOJ in 2010, and part of the agreement calls for regular reporting and monitoring. As has been the regular practice since 2010, the DOJ visited schools this fall to check on the District's progress toward serving all ELLs. BPS has decided to take this opportunity to do the same type of check, but instead of a few schools, it is looking at all schools. BPS will ensure that all services provided are being fully reported in the Student Information System (SIS) to provide a complete picture of every classroom, school, and student. The District is also making the necessary adjustments bring improvements to schools or classrooms that need them. Although BPS has dramatically improved services for ELLs in the last few years, much work remains. As outlined in the BPS Black and Latino males report a few weeks ago, this work

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can only be successful if the District is willing to take a close look its current assumptions and practices and make rapid adjustments where needed.

Yesterday, the Superintendent reconvened the Dearborn School stakeholder group to hear presentations by the two leading external operator candidates, BPE and Mass Prep Network. Selection of an external operator is a necessary condition to prevent Level 5 designation by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Superintendent will make a recommendation to Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester later this week.

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, BPS will hold its annual High School Showcase at Madison Park Technical Vocational High School. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, BPS will host its Parent University Learning Conference at Northeastern University and Mayor Walsh will host a My Brother's Keeper summit at the Timilty Middle School.

The Superintendent expressed his condolences in the wake of yesterday's tragic accident yesterday in Knoxville, TN involving two school buses that serve the Knox County Schools. Two students and a staff member were killed, and many others injured. BPS works closely with many of the men and women who serve in the Knox County Schools as part of the District's relationship with the Council of the Great City Schools. Knox County Superintendent Jim McIntyre, formerly served as BPS chief operating operator and is now Superintendent in Knox County.

At The English High School/Boston Latin Thanksgiving Day football game, The English High School Marching Band performed in uniform for the first time in four decades. Boston Latin reclaimed the football title this year, but the game was also memorable for the resurgence in school spirit for English High.

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, Boston Community Leadership Academy students Imanie Sampson and Andrea Novelle-Ruddy will be honored at the Massachusetts Conference for Women. The Superintendent congratulated both students and wished them good luck.

Mr. Olumuyiwa announced that his is a recipient of the 2014 John and Abigail Adams Scholarship, which provides eight semesters of free tuition to a Massachusetts college or university.

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

#### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

John St. Amand, vice chair, Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SpedPac), testified regarding transitional services and the budget update.

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## ACTION ITEM

*Approved* – The School Committee approved by unanimous consent a HSE Test Center Grant (Fund 280) in the amount of \$6,146.

## REPORTS

*Fiscal Years 2014-16 Budget Update* – Interim Chief Financial Officer Erika Giampietro presented an update on the BPS operating budget for Fiscal Years 2014, 2015 and 2016 (projected). In FY14, BPS ended the year within budget for the 24<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. The District is working to identify cost reductions to address a projected \$16 million shortfall in the current fiscal year, as well as a projected \$65 million plus shortfall in FY16. The increased cost of doing business, new investments and reductions in external funds are all contributing factors shaping the budget challenge. The Superintendent will present the School Committee with his preliminary FY16 budget recommendation on February 4, 2014. The Committee will then hold a series of budget hearings to gather public feedback before voting on the final budget recommendation on March 25, 2014.

School Committee members asked a number of questions about the presentation, all of which were answered by the Superintendent and Ms. Giampietro. Ms. Campbell expressed concern about the rise in the homeless student population and related transportation costs, suggesting a collaborative response by the city and state. Ms. Campbell and Ms. Robinson called on the District to reduce the number of out-of--district placements for special education and vocational students as a way to reduce costs. Mr. O’Neill called the current and projected budget shortfalls a serious concern which will require difficult decisions and trade-offs.

*Boston Education Development Foundation (BEDF) Update* - Jonathan Sproul, Director of Institutional Advancement and Partnerships and Acting Director of BEDF, presented an update on overview of the District’s 501(c)(3). BEDF has \$14.1 million in assets which support a variety of educational support and enrichment opportunities. In recent years, BEDF has implemented a number of reforms in the areas of operations, governance and administration, including the establishment of revolving accounts.

School Committee members asked a number of questions about the presentation, all of which were answered by the Superintendent and Mr. Sproul. Ms. Campbell called on the BEDF Board of Directors to be more strategic and aggressive about raising money and selecting new board members. Mr. Martinez requested information listing the private funding received by school, which the Superintendent agreed to provide.

*Facilities Master Plan Update* - Rahn Dorsey, the Mayor’s Chief of Education, and Carleton Jones, Executive Director of Capital and Facilities Management, presented an update on the District’s efforts to create a 10-year capital master plan. Three teams of consultants have submitted proposals to conduct a comprehensive facilities assessment. A selection committee comprised of city and BPS officials will select the most advantageous team in December. Phase 1 will focus on the District’s educational requirements and enrollment projections concurrent

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with a facilities assessment. Phase 2 will involve the establishment of the master plan, complete with a timeline and funding strategies. The entire process is expected to last approximately 18 months. Give the timing of the effort, a number of space allocation decisions in advance of the master plan are pending for School Year 2015-16.

School Committee members asked a number of questions about the presentation, all of which were answered by the Superintendent and the presenters. Mr. O'Neill suggested that the District establish an advisory group that includes external experts to guide and support the firm that is selected to conduct the facilities assessment.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

Peggy Wiesenberg, former BPS parent, testified regarding the Facilities Master Plan Update and the Budget Update.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was introduced.

## **ADJOURN**

By roll call, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to executive session to discuss collective bargaining. Mr. O'Neill announced that the Committee would not return to public session. The public session adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan  
Executive Secretary