



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING ON SCHOOL CHOICE
AND MEETING**

March 13, 2013

The Boston School Committee held public hearing on School Choice at 5 p.m. on March 13, 2013 at the Edward Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, Boston, Massachusetts. At 6:20 p.m., the Committee began its regular meeting, continuing to entertain public testimony from the hearing.

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.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Grants for Approval Totaling \$132,168.

- Choice Neighborhoods Grant - \$90,000
- Improved Health and Education Outcomes of Young People (YRBS) - \$12,168
- Innovations Schools State Planning Grant Special Education – Program Improvement - \$30,000

Superintendent's Statement on Home-Based Model and Walk Zone

Superintendent's Memo: School Choice Recommendation

Superintendent's Memo: Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS) Collective Bargaining Agreement

Report: New Transportation Contract

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ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O'Neill; Vice-Chairperson Alfreda Harris; John Barros; Meg Campbell; Rev. Gregory G. Groover; Claudio Martinez; and Mary Tamer.

School Committee Member Absent: Student Representative Dan Chu.

Note: Acting Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer John McDonough represented Superintendent Carol R. Johnson, who was on bereavement leave.

SPEAKERS FOR PUBLIC HEARING ON IMPROVING SCHOOL CHOICE

The following speakers testified regarding the proposed Improving School Choice:

Councilor John Connolly, Boston City Council
Muriel Leonard, Former BPS Deputy Superintendent of Clusters and School Leaders
Elaina Quinn, BPS parent, Harbor Middle School, Everett Elementary School
Frank Hart
Jorge Martinez, parent, and CBO, Project Right, Inc.
Joe Golding, parent, Mission Hill K-8 and member, QUEST
Francisco White
Rahsaan Hall, Civil Rights Advocate, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
Sandra McIntosh, Community Member, Coalition for Equal Quality
Vera Miller, parent, Timilty Middle School and member, BPON
Kathleen Colby, BPS parent
Jennifer Herlihy, BPS parent
Naeema Hernandez, Advocate, Mass. Advocates for Children
Kim Janey, Advocate, Mass. Advocates for Children
Meghan Doran
Donna Bivens
Councilor Charles Yancey, Boston City Council
Councilor Tito Jackson, Boston City Council
Ruby Francis, parent, BPON
Michael Heichman, former BPS parent
Samuel Hurtado, parent and Advocate, South Boston en accion
Rose Miller, parent, BPON

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.

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APPROVAL OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

The School Committee approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the February 27, 2013 School Committee meeting.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mr. O'Neill announced that Superintendent Johnson's husband of 40 years, Mathew Johnson, passed away on March 11th. The Superintendent appointed Chief Financial Officer John McDonough to serve as Acting Superintendent while she takes bereavement leave.

On behalf of the School Committee and the entire Boston Public Schools (BPS) community, Mr. O'Neill expressed his condolences to the Johnson Family and called for a moment of silence in honor of Mr. Johnson.

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. McDonough emphasized the Superintendent's commitment to the Home-Based model as a mechanism for improving access to quality.

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

PUBLIC HEARING SPEAKERS (CONTINUED) AND GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people testified on the Superintendent's recommendation on Improving School Choice:

Odette Williamson, parent, Lee Elementary School
Adam Gibbons, parent, Neighborhood House Charter School
Michael Curry, President, Boston NAACP
Hassan Williams
Sarah Heffernan, parent, Edward Everett Elementary School
Nora Toney, Advocate, BEAM
Mirand Allushi, Parent
Peggy Wiesenberg, former BPS parent
Maria Domingez, parent and Phillip Brooks House, Harvard University
John Mudd, Advocate, Mass. Advocates for Children
Karen Kast-McBride, parent, Irving Middle School
Kim Masterson, parent, Irving Middle School
Barbara Fields
Olga Pena, student, English High School
Meosha Jackson, student, English High School
Kenny Jarvis
Stephanie Shapiro Berkson
Geju Brown
Kathryn Brookins

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Rev. Culpepper

ACTION ITEMS

Approved – On roll call, the School Committee approved grants totaling \$132,168 by the following vote:

Mr. Barros – Yes
Ms. Campbell – Yes
Rev. Groover – Yes
Mr. Martinez – Abstain
Ms. Tamer – Yes
Ms. Harris – Yes
Mr. O’Neill – Yes

Mr. McDonough read a statement from Superintendent Johnson outlining the strengths of the Home-Based school choice model, calling it a creative solution that offer families more access to quality schools closer to home. She also recommended that new student assignment plan not include a walk-zone priority, explaining that such a provision is not necessary because the Home-Based model is already a walk zone-centered model. Read the complete text of the Superintendent’s statement here: <http://bostonschoolchoice.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/3-13-13-superintendent-sc-memo-on-assignment.pdf>

Dean Hardin Coleman, Co-Chair of the External Advisory Committee (EAC) on School Choice, and John Nucci, EAC member, presented an overview of the Home-Based school choice model that was approved by the EAC and recommended by the Superintendent.

School Committee members asked questions about how the model works and how it would differ from the current system, all of which were answered by the EAC members and the Superintendent’s executive team. Mr. Barros suggested that the model should be based on capacity. Ms. Harris and Mr. Martinez called for more transparency in the district’s assignment process.

Mr. Martinez made a motion for the Committee to vote on the Superintendent’s Home-Based school choice recommendation with no walk zone priority. Rev. Groover seconded the motion. Ms. Tamer proposed to keep walk zone vote separate from the vote on the school choice model, keeping with the process followed by the EAC. Following extensive discussion among School Committee members, which included input from legal counsel, the Committee voted accordingly:

Approved – By a 6-1 vote, the Committee approved the Superintendent’s Home-Based school choice recommendation with no walk zone priority. The Committee voted as follows:

Mr. Barros – No
Ms. Campbell – Yes
Rev. Groover – Yes

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Mr. Martinez – Yes
Ms. Tamer – Yes
Ms. Harris – Yes
Mr. O’Neill – Yes

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the school choice overlay model for English Language Learners recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the EAC.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the school choice overlay model for Students with Disabilities recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the EAC.

Approved – By a 4-2-1 vote, the Committee approved the school choice overlay model for middle school feeders recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the EAC. The Committee voted as follows:

Mr. Barros – No
Ms. Campbell – Yes
Rev. Groover – Yes
Mr. Martinez – No
Ms. Tamer – Yes
Ms. Harris – Abstain
Mr. O’Neill – Yes

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the additional EAC recommendations put forth by the Superintendent and approved by the EAC.

Approved – By a 5-2 vote, the Committee approved a motion to grandfather current BPS students and siblings and provide transportation through the 2019-2020 school year. The Committee voted as follows:

Mr. Barros – Yes
Ms. Campbell – No
Rev. Groover – Yes
Mr. Martinez – Yes
Ms. Tamer – No
Ms. Harris – Yes
Mr. O’Neill – Yes

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the agreement between the Boston School Committee and the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS) for 2010-2013.

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the agreement between the Boston School Committee and the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS) for 2013-2016.

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Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$539,982 to cover the cost of the agreement between the Boston School Committee and the Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS).

REPORT

Ms. Campbell recused herself from the meeting.

New Transportation Contract – Kim Rice, Chief Operating Officer of Programs and Services, and Carl Allen, Director of Transportation, presented the Superintendent’s proposal to award the district’s new transportation contract to Veolia Transportation, Inc. BPS conducted a rigorous and competitive review process to find a transportation provider that will help the district achieve its goals in (1) improving on-time performance, (2) increasing student safety, (3) enhancing customer service and (4) offering strong fiscal stewardship. Veolia boasts extensive national and international experience providing transportation services and has worked in the Boston area for years, operating paratransit services for 10 facilities for the Boston Veterans Administration and overseeing operations for the MBTA commuter rail.

School Committee members thanked Ms. Rice and Mr. Allen for their efforts to secure a strong transportation partner for BPS. Responding to a question from Ms. Tamer, Mr. Allen assured the Committee that bus drivers will be CORI checked annually.

The Committee is scheduled to vote on the new transportation contract on March 27th.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORT

No speakers.

NEW BUSINESS

On behalf of Ms. Harris, who had departed the meeting, Mr. Barros requested a report on the district’s efforts to bring transparency to the Home-Based model.

Mr. Barros recommended that the district take the following actions:

- Maintain the web site www.bostonschoolchoice.org, including the interactive mapping tool
- Move up the date by which BPS must specify an absolute (rather than relative) threshold for school performance
- Provide additional information on how parent compacting would work
- Explore possibility of modifying the selection of schools available to families by taking into account capacity as well as quality
- Propose tying supply and demand to school capacity.

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Mr. Martinez reiterated the need for more accountability and transparency in the Office of Enrollment Planning and Support.

Ms. Campbell suggested that the district should next examine the quality for BPS high schools.

ADJOURN

At 10:31 p.m., the School Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary