



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

March 4, 2015

The Boston School Committee held a meeting at 6 p.m. on March 4, 2015 at the Edward Winter Chambers, 26 Court Street, Boston, 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.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Minutes: February 4, 2015 School Committee Meeting

Grants for Approval Totaling \$240,958.

- Adult Career Pathways EDIC - \$11,479
- Adult Education Learning Center - \$17,500
- Construction Trades Vocational Equipment Grant - \$100,000
- Early Childhood Special Education Program Improvement (Fund Code 298) - \$10,700
- External Diploma EDIC - \$11,279
- STARTALK Arabic Summer Academy - \$90,000

International Travel Request: Boston Latin School: China, April 17-25, 2015

International Travel Request: Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers: Canada, March 27 - April 2, 2015

International Travel Request: Margarita Muniz Academy: Peru, April 17- 27, 2015

International Travel Request: John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science: Dominican Republic, April 20 - 27, 2015

International Travel Request: John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science: England, France and Italy – April 15- 23, 2015

International Travel Request: John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science: Greece, April 16-24, 2015

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Fiscal Year 2016 Recommended Budget Update and Recommended School Closures

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Michael O’Neill; Meg Campbell; Michael Loconto; Jeri Robinson; Regina Robinson; and student representative Ayomide Olumuyiwa.

School Committee Members Absent: Vice-Chair Dr. Hardin Coleman and Dr. Miren Uriarte

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 February 4, 2015 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

The Superintendent offered his sincere congratulations - on behalf of all 57,000 BPS students and 9,000 employees - to the next Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, Dr. Tommy Chang. He also expressed his commitment to working with Dr. Chang over the next several months to ensure a smooth transition.

The Superintendent reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the district financially and structurally, explaining that the district’s current structure is holding it back from offering a truly world-class education to all students. The District must take dramatic action now on some key issues in order to address this imbalance. One of those strategies involves closing schools at the end of this school year. BPS currently has too many schools for the number of students it serves, stretching resources too thin. This is not sustainable.

In his speech to the Boston Municipal Research Bureau earlier today, Mayor Walsh said, “Today I invite you—I challenge you—to join me in taking the long view. Let’s talk honestly about what it will take to meet those challenges. Let’s talk about the future of our city.” That conversation begins tonight.

Early Teacher hiring is underway in the district. The revamped teacher hiring process, which was initiated last year, allows BPS principals in all 128 schools autonomy in hiring teachers to staff their schools. The initiative also gives teachers more choice in their school placement in the district. By allowing teachers to have a say in where they teach, the district is empowering them to find a role that is a match for their skills, interests and experience. This is at the core of the

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district's strategy to ensure that students have excellent teachers in every school, in every classroom, every single day. All job postings can be found on www.TeachBoston.org.

Last month, Jodi Elgee, director of the BPS Counseling and Intervention Center, was invited to a summit at the White House to present on the work that the district has been doing as part of a national pilot program related to Multi-Disciplinary Threat Assessment and Intervention. Boston is just one of three cities invited to take part in the project. Ms. Elgee had the opportunity to meet with President Obama and Vice President Biden where they discussed the best ways to counter targeted acts of violence. The President spoke highly of Boston, saying that our student support work was "exemplary" and that he was aware of and proud of the work being done at the BPS Counseling and Intervention Center. He also said that he thought the Counseling Center's approach to intervention and prevention could be used as a national model. The Superintendent congratulated Ms. Elgee and the entire team at the CIC for their work.

BPS's move to the Bolling Building in Dudley Square is almost complete. It is a magnificent building that brings BPS central administrators brings us closer to many families and strengthens economic development in Dudley Square. The Superintendent invited Dudley Square neighbors to visit the Bolling Building.

School will be in session on Tuesday, March 17 (Evacuation Day) to make up for an earlier snow day. Also, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has offered districts the choice of administering the 10th grade MCAS exam on an alternate schedule, which delays the exam for a couple weeks. BPS polled our high school headmasters and elected to adopt the alternate schedule to give teachers and students more time to prepare. The schedule for PARCC testing at all other grades will not be changed, as this is a trial year and the test results are not being used for accountability purposes.

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

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people testified regarding the Superintendents preliminary Fiscal Year 2016 budget recommendation:

John St. Amand, vice-chair, Boston Parent Special Education Advisory Council (SpedPac)
Christina Martinez, student, West Roxbury Academy
Dolores Wood, teacher, West Roxbury Academy
Mary Grady, teacher, West Roxbury Academy
Hiba Kafel, student, West Roxbury Academy
Fathi Mohamed, student, West Roxbury Academy
Alan Humbert, teacher, West Roxbury Academy
Johanna Marcellan, student, West Roxbury Academy
Khyaire Mack, student, West Roxbury Academy

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ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Loconto announced that he would abstain from voting on the consent calendar to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest as an employee of Harvard University.

Approved – By roll call, the Committee approved as part of the consent calendar grants for approval totaling \$240,958.

Approved – By roll call, the Committee approved as part of the consent calendar an international travel request for students and chaperones from Boston Latin School to travel to China from April 17-25, 2015.

Approved – By roll call, the Committee approved as part of the consent calendar an international travel request for students and chaperones from the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers to travel to Canada from March 27 - April 2, 2015.

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REPORT

Fiscal Year 2016 Recommended Budget Update and Recommended School Closures - Deputy Chief Financial Officer Chris Giuliani and Budget Director Nathan Kuder presented an update to the Superintendent’s FY16 preliminary budget recommendation. The district is facing a budget gap of \$42-\$51 million. The Superintendent is recommending several strategies to close the gap, including: reductions in central office Full-Time Employee (FTE) count and non-salary spending, efficiencies in transportation and food services, and the first step in a major alignment in enrollment, programs and school facilities.

Chief of Staff Melissa Dodd then presented a report on the Superintendents school closure recommendation. Ms. Dodd explained that BPS is currently structurally imbalanced, forcing the district to spread its resources too thin. She added that inaction could place all students in every

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school at risk. After studying enrollment trends, demand and academic performance, the Superintendent proposes the following schools for closure: Rogers Middle School, West Roxbury Academy, Elihu Greenwood Leadership Academy, Community Academy and Middle School Academy. If the closures are approved by the Committee, the district will support students and families at every step during this transition, providing case management and giving students a high priority for school choice.

Committee members asked a numbers of clarifying questions, all of which were answered by Superintendent McDonough and the presenters. Ms. Campbell asked District leaders to consider the unintended consequences of the proposals. Ms. Regina Robinson requested information about lessons learned from school closures in 2010.

The School Committee will hold several budget hearings during the month of March before voting on the Superintendent's final budget recommendation on March 25. For more information, please visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

Peggy Wiesenberg, former BPS parent, testified regarding the recommended school closures.

Salea Perry, BPS parent, testified regarding the recommended school closures.

John Mudd, education advocate, testified reading the Superintendent's FY16 budget recommendation.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Campbell suggested that the District engage in a conversation with the Boston Teachers Union about starting the 2015-16 school year before Labor Day. She also requested that the enrollment procedures for schools with some level of autonomy be posted on the BPS web site in various languages. Finally, Ms. Campbell congratulated Dr. Tommy Chang on his appointment as BPS superintendent, noting that he will be the first Asian-American to hold the position, a source of pride for Boston's Asian community.

Ms. Regina Robinson requested an update on an earlier suggestion for the Committee to consider establishing sub-committees to address areas of major focus. Mr. O'Neill agreed to consult with Dr. Coleman and follow up. Ms. Robinson also requested an update on the school climate concerns at the Henderson K-12 Inclusion School, which were raised at the January 14 School Committee meeting. The Superintendent agreed to follow up. Lastly, Ms. Robinson expressed her full support and enthusiasm for Dr. Chang's appointment.

ADJOURN

At 9:26 p.m., the School Committee voted by unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.

School Committee Meeting
Edward Winter Chambers

March 4, 2015

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth A. Sullivan".

Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary