



**Enclosure 2b**  
**June 9, 2015**

**MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION**  
**Council on Elementary and Secondary Education**  
**May 28, 2015**

**COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education Work Session was held on May 21, 2015, at the Rhode Island Department of Education, Room 501, 255 Westminister Street, Providence, RI.

Chair Cottam welcomed everyone to the Work Session of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, declared a quorum present and noted for the record that members Beretta and Santos would not be attending the meeting. She then called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

**Present:** Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

**Absent:** Amy Beretta and Mathies Santos

[Member Purtill arrived at 5:11 p.m.]

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Karin Forbes, it was

**VOTED:** That the Council Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the work session of May 23, 2015.

**Vote:** 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

**YEAS:** Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, \*Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

**NAYS:** 0

**[Member Martinez arrived at 5:40 p.m.]**

## **2. REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Cottam began by reporting that earlier in the day she, along with Council Member Martinez and Kevin Gallagher of the Governor's office, toured the R.I. School for the Deaf. They met with Principal McGuire around partnerships that the school is establishing and shared ideas moving forward that the entire Board of Education can look into in the future.

Next, she reported that Daniel McConaghy, the last appointee to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, went through his Senate hearing yesterday and is scheduled to be confirmed by the full Senate next week.

She went on to report that interviews for the next Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education have continued and that there are many great candidates. She expects that very soon we will hear news on that.

She also reported that along with many Board of Education Members, she attended the recent commencement ceremonies and that she was impressed by the sense of accomplishment and pride very evident among students and families, especially the first generation college graduates.

She ended her report by sharing that at its May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council on Postsecondary Education, approved College Unbound for a five-year period. The Council also voted to accept a modification of an agreement with CCRI President Di Pasquale who elected not to seek reappointed of his contract when it ends next June. He will remain as president until a new president has been selected, at which time he will serve in a transitional capacity with the new individual for a period of time. He will also be working on special projects for the Board of Education and the Office of the Postsecondary Education until the end of his contract.

## **3. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER**

Commissioner Gist began her reporting by sharing that last week, the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Governing Board voted to make some adjustments to the PARCC Assessments based on feedback received. The changes include using only one testing window as well as reducing the total testing time by 90 minutes in the coming school year. The redesign of the PARCC Assessment will result in the consolidation of the two testing windows that stretched from March to June, into one testing period of approximately 30 days, although most schools will need only one or two weeks to complete their testing. This action by the Governing Board should help resolve some of the issues school leaders and test coordinators, as well as students who

participated in the PARCC assessments, have raised in the follow-up surveys.

Commissioner Gist ended her report by thanking everyone who joined her the previous evening at her farewell celebration.

#### **4. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

##### **Encl4a & Encl4a1 - Necessity of School Construction Projects (Cumberland and Providence)**

Commissioner Gist introduced the Necessity of School Construction Projects for Cumberland and Providence totaling \$46M, which focuses in large part on hazardous material abatement and fire suppression. These types of projects underwent an extremely thorough review process and each district worked with registered building professionals to reduce their scopes of work to address only immediate health and safety needs. The scopes of work were also confirmed by an independent peer review conducted by RIDE professional staff.

Joe da Silva, RIDE's School Construction Coordinator and Cindy Brown, Director of RIDE's Office of Statewide Efficiencies, joined the table and gave a high-level overview of the very rigorous school construction process, from planning, to design and reviews, through construction, to housing aid reimbursement.

Member Purtill asked who reviews the local bidding process. Mr. da Silva answered that the local school districts handle the bidding and RIDE gets involved depending on the project size and if it sees a potential problem with the bids when submitted. Member Purtill also asked that when the school construction moratorium gets lifted and more school projects come forward if the review process will remain the same. Mr. da Silva answered that RIDE's rigorous process has been in effect since 2007 prior to the moratorium and will remain the same.

Member Gaines asked whether all projects have the same June 30<sup>th</sup> project completion deadline. Mr. da Silva answered that yes, all projects have that deadline allowing RIDE to project what projects are coming and project budgets accordingly years in advance.

Member Callahan asked that considering Providence's infrastructure if RIDE expects to see more requests from Providence once the moratorium is lifted. Mr. da Silva answered that since there are many immediate health and safety issues in Providence that we may be dealing with only those types of projects for the next few years.

##### **Encl4b - FY 2017 Capital Budget**

Commissioner Gist introduced the FY 2017 Capital Budget and reminded Council Members that the capital budget funds a small set of capital projects for RIDE and, most

importantly, for the state schools. The request includes \$22M in spending from FY 2016 – FY 2021 for nine projects. Including money already spent, the nine projects result in a total of \$50M. The request includes two projects for the state-owned, locally-operated career and technical centers (Warwick and Woonsocket); two projects for the William M. Davies Career and Technical High School; two projects for the Metropolitan Career and Technical Center; two projects for statewide information technology initiatives; and one project at the Shepard Building.

Andrea Castaneda and Mark Dunham, RIDE's Budget Director joined the table and walked Council Members through enclosure 4b.

Council Member Callahan asked where schools are in terms of technology if they are fully functional for integration of technology into instruction.

Ms. Castaneda answered that as schools increase their own use of technology, the State will be faced with the necessity of increasing the bandwidth capacity that gets routed into the schools. RIDE put a request in for additional funding in this year's budget and has made some recommendations through the Broadband Width Commission. The Commission will be issuing a report over the next couple of weeks.

#### **Encl4c – RIDE's Executive Pay Plan and Salary Ranges**

Commissioner Gist introduced the topic by explaining that RIDE's Executive Pay Plan and Salary Pay Ranges needs annual approval by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. The only change since the review and approval by the Council in 2014 is a 2% across-the-board increase, which is consistent with the statewide salary and healthcare adjustment package.

#### **Enc4d- Proposed Regenerated Certification Test and Passing Score, for the Purpose of Public Review and Comment**

Commissioner introduced the topic by reminding Council Members who have been on the Board that the Board of Regents Regulations Governing the Certification of Education in R.I. require RIDE to seek Council approval to adopt new or revised certification tests and passing scores that are required for initial licensure.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS), which provides most R.I. licensure tests, has revised one additional test (Early Childhood Content Knowledge) and has conducted a validation study on a national scale. A Rhode Island educator participated in the validation study for the revised test and RIDE staff and the Certification Policy Advisory Board has reviewed the standard setting process.

Member Callahan suggested RIDE monitor the process over the next couple of years to see where R.I. teachers score in comparison to other states and adjust the cut-score accordingly.

#### **Encl4e - Update on Strategic Planning**

Chair Cottam stated that this evening the Council will be discussing the fourth and final draft version of the Elementary and Secondary Education strategic plan and that at their next meeting they will be reviewing the proposed final version. At the Council's recommendation, RIDE scheduled three teacher feedback sessions as well as a meeting with higher education teacher preparation program officials, and will be hosting a meeting with school committees. She commended the Ambassador Design Team and RIDE staff on their public outreach throughout the entire process.

Commissioner Gist thanked Council Members for the great discussions and the feedback that they provided at the last meeting, and also for their recommendations on how to better involve everyone in the process.

Andrea Castaneda and Lisa Tomasso, Member of the Ambassador Design Team, joined the table and gave a brief introduction to Prototype 4 and answered questions.

Ms. Tomasso shared her perspective as a member of the Ambassador Design Team and commended the proposed strategic plan in that each strategy holds every stakeholder responsible for a piece of the action.

Chair Cottam asked Ms. Castaneda if she felt that each stakeholder could be held accountable for a piece of the action. Ms. Castaneda replied yes, but that it will require some targeted outreach.

#### **Encl4f - Charter Schools - RISE Mayoral Academy**

Chair Cottam indicated that this evening RIDE is recommending that the Council grant final approval for the RISE Mayoral Academy at its June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. The school, which was given preliminary approval by the Council on October 14, 2014, has met the criteria for final approval outlined in the Charter School Regulations. She shared that she is aware that this proposal has generated significant discussion amongst the Council and the community since the school was initially approved. She then turned the conversation over to Commissioner Gist to provide an overview of the process, steps taken to date and to give an update on the readiness of the school.

Commissioner Gist stated that the RISE Prep Mayoral Academy is a proposed Mayoral Academy with a mission to prepare students in grades K-8 for success in college and a life of community engagement. The charter proposal was submitted on May 16, 2014, and aims to serve students in Woonsocket, North Smithfield and Burrillville. The proposal has been reviewed in accordance with the charter school proposal review process, which includes publicly posting applications on RIDE's website and providing a 60-day public comment period; and holding two public hearings. Upon completion of the public

comment period, RIDE staff, along with an advisory committee, reviews the application and evaluates the proposal against the proposal requirements, and conducts a half-day capacity interview with the proposed founding team of the proposed school.

On October 14, 2014, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education voted to grant RISE Prep Mayoral Academy preliminary approval, which is an endorsement of the school concept granting the school the ability to begin readiness proceedings and activities to open in the 2015-2016 school year.

Prior to receiving Council approval, a preliminarily approved charter school must satisfactorily complete a number of tasks to be recommended for final approval, in accordance with the council's charter school regulations. These include:

- Forming a board of directors and implementing board policies and practices, in compliance with Open Meetings Law;
- Updates on progress of developing the academic program described in the initial charter;
- Updating the school's five-year budget, and developing a one-year budget and monthly cash flow that is in line with current funding estimates and operational plans;
- Acquiring a facility and demonstrating that the school has budgeted appropriately for the facility and any required improvements; and
- Effectively manage the enrollment lottery enrolling a minimum of 50% of the maximum enrollment for the given year.

RISE Prep Mayoral Academy has successfully met all of the requirements for final approval. The complete list of regulatory requirements and completed tasks is included in your summary materials behind enclosure 4f. It is important to note that RIDE received a total of seven charter school proposals in 2014 and RISE is the only proposed school being recommended for final approval.

Commissioner Gist reminded Council Members that as per state statute, RIDE only brings forward recommendations for approval. RIDE does not bring forward recommendations to deny approval for the other proposed charter schools. One of the areas where RISE excels is related to the school's board.

The RISE board is chaired by Paulette Hamilton who is the elected Town Administrator from North Smithfield. Other members of the Board include:

- Lisa Baldelli-Hunt, Mayor of Woonsocket
- John Gregory, President of the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce
- Chris Gruttadauria, Senior Executive from CVS
- Donna Stone, who is a North Smithfield Resident and curriculum expert.

Commissioner Gist noted that the Mayor of Woonsocket was initially identified to serve as the chair, but stepped down from this position in December, but remains on the board. Town Administrator Hamilton, in her role as an elected town administrator for North Smithfield, fulfills all of the statutory requirements outlined in Rhode Island General Laws for Mayoral Academies. Additionally, the school has hired an experienced and qualified business manager and has partnered with R.I. Mayoral Academy for assistance related to facilities.

In order to keep Council Members fully informed, RIDE combined and re-shared all of the public feedback received since October related to the RISE Prep Mayoral Academy. RIDE believes that the RISE Prep Mayoral Academy will be a successful school serving a regional and highly diverse population of students. The school will be an asset to Rhode Island's children and families. RIDE is confident that the RISE Mayoral Academy is ready and prepared to open in the fall and recommends that at its June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council will grant the school final approval to open and serve students beginning in the 2015-16 school year.

Chair Cottam shared that while reading through the public feedback she noticed a comment from a member of the public that questions whether the Smithfield Town Administrator can sign the application. She asked whether RIDE had looked into the matter.

Commissioner Gist responded that, yes, RIDE has looked into the matter to ensure that it followed all the appropriate statutes and regulations and asked David Abbott, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel, to address the matter since it is legal in nature.

Mr. Abbott responded that he had reached out to the town solicitor from North Smithfield to ask what the basis of that was and apparently in the town's charter there is a requirement that the town administrator get the authorization of the town council prior to entering into contracts. They had a good discussion and both agreed that signing the application is not the same as entering into a contract and that authorization by the town council is not be required.

Member Callahan expressed her grave concerns with very clear opposition received from the three cities/ towns involved and with the fact that both the North Smithfield town administrator as well as the Mayor of Woonsocket have been asked by their town councils to step down and remove their signatures from the application, which puts their governance in question. And the larger issue for her is that the Council on Elementary

and Secondary Education would make a decision going forward in the face of this very substantial opposition from the host and sending districts.

Commissioner Gist voiced that what she would encourage this Council to consider is how important it is to know that these two courageous leaders, who are elected, are holding steady in the face of opposition. These leaders know that having a school of this caliber will improve their own school systems as well as serve the families who are depending on this kind of education in their own communities.

Member Gaines voiced her concern with the RISE Mayoral Academy requesting a waiver to not participate in the state teachers' retirement system. She is also concerned with the fairness of the funding formula and is inclined to wait and vote until that discussion takes place in the General Assembly.

Member Purtill also voiced that based on the resolutions from North Smithfield, Burrillville, and a real important one from Woonsocket concerning its finances, there doesn't seem to be widespread support from the three communities and that the Council is going to be moving forward anyway. It seems that we are the R.I. Department of Mayoral Academies rather than the R.I. Department of Public Education as the money is going to a small number of kids rather than the majority, and that is the problem.

Member Stevos voiced that she doesn't understand how the Council can in good faith pull the rug from under the RISE Mayoral Academy after granting them preliminary approval, giving them the go ahead to do all of the necessary planning.

Member Callahan voiced that it troubles her that in the face of all the opposition, the RISE Mayoral Academy continued on with its planning.

Prior to ending the meeting, Mr. Abbott cautioned Council members that if they do end up denying the request, that it does trigger a due process hearing, meaning that the Council would need to be very precise in its rationale for denying it. Presuming that the applicant will mount a legal challenge, this is not an area where the Council can just say no without a rationale.

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Collen Callahan, it was

**VOTED:** That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes, Jo Eva Gaines, Marta Martinez, Lawrence Purtill, and Joyce Stevos

NAYS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.