

**BOARD OF REGENTS  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**WORK SESSION MINUTES**

**Thursday, May 20, 2010  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

---

The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room  
255 Westminster Street – Providence, RI 02903

---

Commissioner's Comments

Central Falls Update - Commissioner Gist commented on the settlement between the Central Falls school administration and the Central Falls teachers' union that will allow Central Falls teachers to keep their jobs in September. Ms. Gist told the group that the agreement is "...good news.... and good for Central Falls students." She also thanked Judge Torres for all his work with the district.

Next, the Commissioner updated the group on the Central Falls school facilities. She reminded the Regents that, in September 2009, they had approved \$20,499,999 in priority repairs to the eight school facilities in Central Falls. She said that since then RIDE has been working with the school district and the City of Central Falls to address these repairs, and approximately \$1.2 million in emergency repairs have already been completed in the Captain Hunt Early Learning Center and Calcutt Too Middle School. However, since the completion of the emergency repairs the progress has been inadequate. The delays have caused the school district to miss the deadline for a voter referendum, and the slow progress has jeopardized the viability of the project as well as favorable financing opportunities, including \$7.7 million in Qualified School Construction Bonds allocated to Central Falls in 2009. Given these circumstances, the Central Falls School District and the City of Central Falls are willing to transfer these facilities to the State of Rhode Island for one dollar in order to assure the repairs are completed expeditiously.

RIDE has begun conversations with the Department of Administration, including State Budget Officer Thomas Mullaney and Director Rosemary Booth Gallogly, regarding the transfer of facilities. RIDE is currently assembling all the documentation requested by the Department of Administration to assess the viability of the transfer, including looking at outstanding debt service, projected debt service, projected capital improvement expenditures, operational asset protection expenses, and an architectural feasibility study.

RTTT Update - The Commissioner told the Board that the RTTT application is due in one week and that the work on it is going well. On Monday, May 24, there will be a news conference at the Rhode Island Foundation. More details to follow.

Legislative Update - Commissioner Gist reported that, on the federal front, Senator Harkin (D- Iowa) had written a bill to match one passed in the House (by George Miller D-Cal.) to provide \$23 billion in aid to schools, the Keep Our Educators Working Act of 2010. Its purpose is to address the 100,000 to 300,000 educational jobs at risk this year across the nation and to address the cuts to instructional programs. To get passage (and avoid some cost-offset requirements), the administration and House and Senate leaders are considering adding the bill as an amendment to the \$33.5 billion war appropriations act. They were hoping to vote before the Memorial Day break. The Regents discussed if the Board should "officially" go on record that the Board supports the bill. It was decided that the item would be put on the June 3<sup>rd</sup> agenda for consideration.

#### BOR Approval of Qualified School Construction Bond

The Commissioner explained that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides for the issuance of Qualified School Construction Bonds (QSCB) in the amount of \$22,062,000 to the State of Rhode Island. This year, the federal legislation authorizing QSCBs was amended to change the allocating authority from the "state" to the "state education agency." Therefore, the allocation certificate signed by the Governor is no longer legally effective, and the Board of Regents must act to allocate the QSCB volume cap. The Regents are being asked to approve the designation of a portion of the QSCB 2009 State Allocation to the Chariho Regional School District, the City of Warwick, and the Town of Westerly.

**MOVED AND SECONDED:** THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Designation of a Portion of the Qualified School Construction Bond 2009 State Allocation to the Chariho Regional School District, City of Warwick, and the Town of Westerly, as Presented.

**VOTE:** Approved Unanimously.

#### Denial of Requests of School Day - Coventry & Cranston

The Commissioner explained that again, because of last month's flooding and in accordance with Rhode Island General Law, 16-2-3, two more requests to reduce the number of school days is being brought before the Board for consideration. The first is a request from the Coventry School District for a waiver of one school day for the district; the second is from Cranston - also a request for a waiver of one school day for the district. Commissioner Gist then asked that the Board deny both requests. She said that she thinks that these days should be treated just like any other bad-weather days and should be made up at the end of the school year.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Denies the Request for the Waiver of One School Day for the Coventry School District, as Presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Denies the Request for the Waiver of One School Day for the Cranston School District, as Presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Review of School Construction Projects - North Smithfield, Newport, East Providence

Commissioner Gist reminded the Regents that they are responsible for reviewing and certifying the Necessity of School Construction applications for district-owned schools reimbursed through housing aid. At the June 3 Board of Regents meeting, the Board will be asked to approve three projects: North Smithfield, Newport, and East Providence. All projects have undergone rigorous review under the multistage school-construction process and are in compliance with the school-construction regulations. The first project includes districtwide capital improvements, at a total cost of \$3.6 million, for the North Smithfield School District. The second project includes districtwide capital improvements not to exceed a cost of \$27.1 million for the East Providence School District. The third project is for the construction of a new elementary school, not to exceed a cost of \$30 million, for the Newport School District. The Board was given details on each of the three projects.

Review of Property Transfer - Chariho Career & Technical Center

This agenda item is also in preparation for a June 3 vote. The agenda item asks for Board consideration on transferring one of six remaining state-owned Career & Technical Centers. The Commissioner explained to the Board that the Chariho Career & Technical Center is state-owned but locally operated. Additionally, RIDE is pursuing the transfer of all remaining career and technical school buildings from state to local ownership. Funding for the continued renovation of these facilities would thereafter be provided both by local resources and by the standard school housing-aid program. This transfer process was recently completed in Providence and is currently being negotiated in East Providence and Newport. At present, the Board of Regents is being asked to consider the property transfer of the Chariho Career-Technical Area Center to the Chariho Regional School District.

Review of Proposed Charter Public School Projects

Charter School Grant - The Commissioner told the Board that a Charter School Program Grant application was submitted for approximately \$10 million to support 25 newly authorized charter public schools over the next three years. The funding supports charter incubation and start-up costs for authorized charter public schools.

Charter Public School Accountability - The Commissioner then reported that all charter performance is being reviewed and compared against average performance of other charters in Rhode Island serving similar grade spans, the state average for that grade span, and the average performance within the district in which the charter is located. Schools will be notified of their performance using these benchmarks, and those with substantial underperformance will be notified.

Prospective Charter Public Schools continue to move forward with their applications.

- At the June 6 Board meeting, we will be making the following recommendations to the Board of Regents:
  1. Full Authorization for SY 2010-11 (pending General Assembly funding)
    - a. Trinity Academy: maximum enrollment 204 students, grades 7-12
    - b. Greene School: maximum enrollment 210 students, grades 9-12.
  2. Preliminary Approval for SY 2011-12
    - a. Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College: maximum enrollment 272 students, grades 10-12.
  
- Existing Charter Schools
  1. Highlander : RIDE is recommending nonrenewal for a five-year charter. However, the Commissioner told the group that she does recommend a one-year provisional renewal to support student and family transitions. With a clear performance agreement in place, RIDE staff will re-evaluate Highlander's status in January 2011. The group discussed the data used to make the decision on the five year nonrenewal and the recommendation of a one-year provisional renewal.
  2. The Blackstone Valley-Democracy Prep expansion request has been modified. Its revised request is to expand kindergarten by 76 students. The Commissioner recommends approval of the request.
  3. The NE Laborers/Cranston Construction Careers Academy request to expand enrollment from 245 to 300 has been denied on the basis of performance data.

Review of Certification Public Hearings and Proposed Changes

- Commissioner Gist reported that the Board of Regents and the Certification Policy Advisory Board co-chaired public hearings on the suspension of the IPlan renewal process. More than 250 teachers and administrators attended the two hearings. Sixty-five teachers and administrators, including one superintendent, provided written and oral testimony. Twelve attendees opted not to comment because their concerns were addressed by previous speakers.

- Sixty-four speakers were opposed to the suspension of the IPlan renewal system as proposed for the following reasons:
  1. There is no replacement process in place.
  2. Many individuals have already met the minimum requirements for renewal but will not be allowed to submit their work.
  3. An agreement/contract was struck with the Regents that if they completed the IPlan requirements, they would be entitled to a 5-year certificate.
  4. National Board Certified Teachers will no longer be recognized for their attaining the highest professional teaching credential available to the field; the five additional years of certification, matching the national board recognition, will no longer be in effect.
  5. One teacher said she was glad to see IPlan go and thought it was “ill-conceived from the beginning.” She went on to say: “Your implementation is not fair to say that people who have met the criteria will not be awarded their 5-year certificates.” The last time the Regents changed the certification system, they allowed a phase-in process to be fair and equitable to those already in the “pipeline” so as to allow them to complete their original commitment; the same courtesy should be afforded now.
- Paulajo Gaines, director, conducted Q&A sessions after each hearing. Though this is not ordinary practice, it was key to helping educators understand why this suspension must happen in this way.
- Ms. Gaines was able to resolve many areas of misinformation, such as:
  1. Educators would lose years on their certificates;
  2. Educators would lose the money paid previously for fees for certificates;
  3. Educators would pay \$200 for a one-year certificate; and
  4. This is a permanent change to one-year certificates.
- The two primary questions from educators are:
  1. Why are you not allowing those educators who have completed their required hours to submit early and receive the five-year certificate?
  2. Why are you doing this before having a new renewal system in place?  
What is the rush?

The Regents discussed the time line for the implementation of the proposed regulations.

Adjournment: With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.