

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLIC WORK SESSION

MARCH 11, 2015

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE, CRANSTON, RI

EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:00 P.M.

**PUBLIC WORK SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

MINUTES

The School Committee meeting was held on the evening of the above date at the William A. Briggs Building with the following members present: Chairperson Ruggieri, Mr. Colford, Mrs. Culhane, Mr. Fusco, Mr. Gale, Mr. Traficante and Mr. Wall. Attorney Cascione was present during Executive Session.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Traficante; seconded by Mr. Gale to convene to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws. The roll was called; all were in favor: Mr. Colford – Yes; Mrs. Culhane – Yes; Mr. Fusco – Yes; Mr. Gale – Yes; Mrs. Ruggieri – Yes; Mr. Traficante – Yes; Mr. Wall – Yes:

PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel:

A. Discussion of Certified Administrator A

PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining/Litigation:

B. Potential litigation/grievance – Legal advice

PL 42-46-5(3)

C. District Safety Plan

Call to order at 7:15 p.m. – Public Session

The roll was called; a Quorum was present.

Executive Session Minutes were sealed – Mrs. Ruggieri stated that no votes were taken in Executive Session people listed under Personnel were notified. A motion was made to seal the minutes of the executive session. Moved by Mr. Traficante; seconded by Mr. Wall. The roll was called; Mr. Colford – Yes; Mrs. Culhane – Yes; Mr. Fusco – Yes; Mr. Gale – Yes; Mrs. Ruggieri – Yes; Mr. Traficante – Yes; Mr. Wall – Yes

Adjourn to Public Work Session at 7:18 p.m.

Discussion on donation from Alan Shawn Feinstein – Edgewood Highland School and Hugh B. Bain Middle School

Jenny Chan-Remka, Principal at Hugh B. Bain Middle School spoke to the Committee regarding the donations that Alan Shawn Feinstein proposed to make to both Edgewood Highland School and Hugh B. Bain Middle School (see handout A on file in the Superintendent's

Office for further information).

Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS)

Joseph Rotz, Director of Educational Programs and Services spoke on the Comprehensive Assessment System.

Mr. Rotz stated – I have some information for all of you. In the update last week you received the updated assessment for the proposed Comprehensive Assessment System. I wanted to provide additional information because we have received a variety of questions through emails about what assessments we were conducting at different age levels and different schools. I wanted to provide you with the information so you had the information if questions come your way. This Comprehensive Assessment System was taken from another district that has had it in place for a few years.

Dr. Lundsten stated – What Ron (Cascione) and his office did was come up with the policy. This is a template of a policy for an assessment system. Keep in mind that the basic education plan is a regulation that says we have to have an assessment plan. We have that language if you would like to see it. It has to meet certain criteria as well. Ron (Cascione) and his partners took it, developed the policy and we reviewed it as an executive team and made a few tweaks to it. We also wanted to give you the entire outline so you know what you are dealing with. You will see all the assessments that we did.

Mr. Rotz stated – Most of the curriculum work we have been doing is to try and get up to date with the expectation of this policy. When teachers are going through the curriculum at the end of the quarter

they give a curriculum embedded assessment so that we are monitoring the learning of our students and it is aligned to Common Core standards (see handout B on file in the Superintendent's Office for further information). The next handout is a previous policy which is still in play, it's our Proficiency Based Diploma Policy #5123. This is our current policy. We already have a policy in place that students participate in a state assessment program. When parents are opting out, we are just holding those letters but that is why we are stuck between a rock and a hard place when dealing with this because we already have a policy saying they should be participating (see handout C on file in the Superintendent's Office for further information).

The next handout that I have is our assessments that we provide as a district. We provided a quick overview on the first page, how many assessments and as you get deeper into the packet, you find more information (see handout D on file in the Superintendent's Office for further information).

Mrs. Culhane stated – So of all these assessments, are they all mandated by RIDE or are these what our district feels are necessary assessments?

Mr. Rotz stated - You have to have some type of screening assessment or progress monitoring assessment. You have to have a way to monitor student learning. That is described in the packet. There is an assessment in here that we use on a small number of students when there is an issue that we are trying to figure out. Then there are assessments that we use district wide that are mandated

because we have to monitor learning in reading and in math in a standardized way. We have an assessment committee in Cranston. I have talked to Sue Deriso, our Director of Literacy and she helps with the assessment part. She brought up a good point because we want to make sure that we are getting information back from the high achievers. The committee has gone back and forth on that topic

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – Are we currently able to provide those high performers with that?

Mr. Rotz stated – I think we do. Most students that are in higher level courses that are performing at grade level we can take some of these away. I think that is where we are going especially with the expectations of PARCC right now. This is my own personal opinion, but I do not see how PARCC will be able to continue to with this testing time that they currently have in place. I think they people at PARCC had good intentions, but when they start implementing this and see how it affects the high school schedule when you shut a building down for a month. They will see what sounded like a nice two part assessment system, it does not work with a huge building and a lot of kids.

We are all concerned with the amount of assessments we are doing and the time it takes.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated - If we had known back when Race to the Top was going on that this was going to come along with it, I don't think anybody would have gone for this.

Mrs. Culhane stated – We are doing a lot of prep right now to teach the kids how to finagle the computers, but the prep is embedded in

the curriculum because it is based on Common Core. With NECAP there was actual test preparation. There should not be actual preparing besides working on the computer. Is PARCC really taking up more time for prep and testing than NECAP did?

Dr. Lundsten stated – The difference with NECAP is we did not test every grade. Now we are doing every grade.

Mrs. Culhane stated - Take out the fact that we are now testing everybody, but time wise?

Mr. Rotz stated – Yes, it is taking a lot more time. One, technology is a huge issue. Second, with NECAP there was a lot of information like item analysis so people started using some of those tasks and embedded them into the curriculum. It is taking more time. For example, updates on the test site. Once you do these updates on the computers you can't have the students going onto different sites because they may have to upload different updates. With this site, you have to have the computer set and ready to go to access this test. In order for our teachers to go on the training site, they need different updates than the test site.

Mrs. Culhane stated – Did we every find out how long the contract is?

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – The final year is 2017-2018. I saw that in Arkansas, their legislature determined that they are not even going to give the test this year because their Board of Education came back and said to them that they only had a one year contract with Pearson and they were not going to renew it. So the legislature came back and said why bother, it is going to take a lot of time, etc. That got me

to thinking, what is going on with Rhode Island. I sent a message to the Commissioner and someone from her office responded to me and said that we have a contract until the 2017-2018 school year. I asked her if they are going to be renewing the contract then and she said they had not discussed it and it would be discussed closer to the end of the contract. I thought they would have a longer range plan than that, but that was the response that I was given. It will be interesting to see what is going on and I try to keep up on what is happening in different states. I am seeing things about kids in other states taking the test and posting the questions on line.

Dr. Lundsten stated – I asked the same question and I was told that there are different versions of the test, just like there were 9 versions of the NECAP.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – I find it interesting to watch what is happening around the country. Especially what just happened in Florida where it blew up their computers. It is important to see and ask questions because these are things we don't think about and we have not gone through the entire process yet.

Update on Food Service RFP

Mr. Balducci provided an update on the Food Service RFP. He stated that our contract with Sodexo ends in June. This is the last of a five year relationship that we have had with them. This is the furthest we can go with it and RIDE requires this to go out to bid. We did that and received responses back from the major players, Aramark, Chartwells and Sodexo. The requirement from RIDE is that we establish a Review Committee, which has been created. The members of that

committee are Raymond Votto, myself, Kerrylin Reagan, Martha Sylvestre and Courtney Sevigny. We met about a week and a half ago for what I call a “pre-scoring meeting” because part of the RFP is that we have a scoring matrix and the values assigned to each area had to be reviewed by RIDE before I can even submit the RFP. The group met, I gave each of them a proposal from the vendors for them to review, along with a copy of the scoring matrix. We were supposed to meet this past Monday but were not able to. We are hoping to reschedule this sometime next week. We wanted to have a recommendation to Judy (Lundsten) and the committee at this month’s meeting, but we wanted to make sure we had everything and are hopeful to have it before you next month.

Discussion of West Bay Health

Mr. Balducci stated – On the agenda it states “Discussion of West Bay Health” but as a prelude to that, I have given you some documentation (see handout E on file with the Superintendent’s Office for further information). The other thing that will be coming down the road for school districts and municipalities is called OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits). For the longest time the only requirement has only been to identify what that liability is. The reporting agency referred to as GASC (Government Accounting Standards Clause) is going to require that next year we report that liability on the financial statements. The auditors are going to have to show the liability on the school districts and municipality side. What I am looking to do is open an OPEB Trust Fund and start funding it that so when the company comes in to do their analysis that line will not

be zero, there will be value of assets that we will be able to invest and hopefully that liability is netted against the assets. The initial contribution I am looking to make is about \$500,000. We do not have that money in our budget, so where am I going to get that money? The next document I want to refer you to is a Statement of New Position (see handout F on file with the Superintendent's Office for further information). Please look at the last column to the right where it says Internal Service Funds. The District is a member of the West Bay Health Collaborative and part of the relationship with that is we pay a monthly premium and the Collaborative pays out the actual claims then Blue Cross sends them a bill. Since being with them, we may send them \$1.8 Million, but on a monthly basis we may pay \$1.6 Million. This number has been accumulating over the last several years. As of June 30, 2014, cash on hand on our behalf at the Collaborative is approximately \$6.2 Million. Part of the process is to put in a request to the organization, which I have already done so. This will be formalized by you folks next week in way of a resolution. This is where I am pulling that figure from.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – This is one of the many reasons why we would not want to leave West Bay Collaborative.

Mr. Balducci stated – Yes, one of many. It allows us to have the resources that we can tap into to use for a number of different reasons.

Mrs. Culhane stated – I remember a discussion about this where we can only take some of that up to a certain percentage? So people understand, this is not a rainy day fund and there are limits and caps

with this money.

Mr. Balducci stated – There is a cap. I asked that of the Executive Director what is the most we could take out and I believe it is approximately \$1.8 Million dollars. We cannot use this money to pay for our electric bill. The funds have been generated because of good claims.

Mr. Traficante stated – Doesn't the City do the same thing?

Mr. Balducci stated – Yes, they have already established an OPEB Trust Fund. I do not know if they funded it yet.

Mr. Traficante stated – If it is an enterprise fund, how can you borrow from it?

Mr. Balducci stated – It is not an Enterprise Fund.

Mrs. Culhane stated – So with our \$11 Million dollar liability, what kind of shape are we in compared to other districts our size?

Mr. Balducci stated – The other post-employment benefit offering is healthcare coverage until age 65. So pre-pension reform an employee could retire at age 52 or 53 and we own that obligation until age 65. Now post-pension reform, that window has shrunk, which means we don't own them as long and it dropped down to \$11 Million dollars.

Mr. Traficante stated – Can you give me a couple of examples of when you can borrow from the fund and why.

Mr. Balducci stated – This would be the only way I would recommend taking from it.

Mrs. Culhane stated – With all the legal issues that are going on right now with pension reform, how would this number be affected if things

were reversed? Would we see ourselves back in a negative position? Mr. Balducci stated – Yes, you may. The last document I want to bring to your attention is this newsletter (see handout G on file with the Superintendent’s office for further information). The District is a member of the Rhode Island Inter-local Risk Management Trust. This is where we buy our vehicle insurance and building insurance. At the annual meeting they had in January they announced that they are establishing a statewide OPEB Trust Fund so as a member of the organization we do not have to go through the process of hiring an attorney, getting a determination letter from the IRS to make sure it meets their definition. Hopefully on July 1 I can say here is the \$500,000. First, an agreement will be placed before the School Committee to get your approval. I just want to be in a position that when this takes place, I have the money.

Discussion on revision to Student Retention Policy

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – In January we had passed an updated Retention Policy talking about notification to parents when students are recommended for retention and just to clarify that the ultimate decision is made by the building principal. We had a couple of cases where parents refused to let their child be retained causing problems down the road as the children got older and their problems exacerbated. At the hearing level, although we are supported, one of the recommendations from the hearing officers at RIDE was to revisit the policy that as the children are younger and we want to retain them that we have a strong policy that holds that recommendation at a higher regard if you will. Ron (Cascione) saw the policy and made a

few changes and he asked me to bring it back to you. This is a revision to a policy that you approved in January (see attached policy for further information). Ron (cascione) stated that we only needed one reading since this is a revision and it will be before you on Monday, March 16, 2015.

Discussion of new Registration Packet

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – This is our new Registration packet (see handout H on file with the Superintendent’s Office for further information). Mrs. Ruggieri and Mr. Traficante were your representatives on the Committee for this, as were secretaries, administrators and myself. As we have all heard, there are students who do not live in Cranston, which is a resource problem for us because we want to support the kids that live in our community. When we really started to look at this we realized it was very easy for people to register to go to our schools and it is much harder for us to get them out when we find out they are not living here. As you look through this, you will see that it is a much more rigorous process. I will say that it has taken us hours to look at all this, look at the work flow and how will this work for parents as well as our staff. We have a checklist so parents are very clear on what to bring. We changed the form a little bit because some of the secretaries look at information that they were not able to see. We mirrored this to our ASPEN system so when they are registering the data is being inputted. One very important thing is we have defined what residence is, which is critical because we never really had this. We also quoted

some of the regulations and at the bottom we indicate the three pieces of evidence that we need from them, where before we only needed one. Before, what was happening was a parent would move into the district, get a short term lease, get a utility bill, register and in a short period of time, move out. Because we send things electronically now, we don't get the mail back. Since the development of this, we have gotten a lot of anonymous tips.

Mrs. Culhane stated – For children who have two parents that are divorced and living in two different school areas, how are we making sure the child is properly being registered and what their homeschool is?

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – If they have shared custody, they can pick which one. If it is placement, you bring a copy of your divorce decree and explain to us that the child has placement in a certain area.

Mr. Colford stated – It does not matter which parent has custody they can choose either of those two?

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – If they can prove that they spend 50% of the time there, yes.

Physical Therapy Services Agreement

Mrs. Simpson stated – For over 10 years we used a Labrie for our PT. It was going great and then they increased their fees every year. We then decided to see what else was out there. We found West Bay Collaborative as a service provider for physical therapy. We started with them about 3 years ago at \$150,000 and their contract has remained the same. The big difference between the two is we get 2 full time people with West Bay. They do a fabulous job. I ask that

you consider them again (see Handout I on file with the Superintendent's Office for further information).

Mr. Traficante stated – This \$150,000 is already in our budget?

Mrs. Simpson stated – Yes.

Mr. Colford stated – How long is the contract?

Mrs. Simpson stated – We do it yearly.

Discussion of waiver from RIDE for two snow days

Dr. Lundsted stated – I am seeking a waiver for the 2 days for when the Governor closed the roads because of the blizzard. In order for me to put the waiver in, I will write it but it has to be based on a School Committee resolution so I will need a resolution on Monday evening. I will draft the letter and put it in your update. I will be using regulations that speak to the health and safety of all children.

Discussion of waiver from RIDE for one school day for Orchard Farms

Dr. Lundsten stated – You may recall, I had to close the school due to massive water in the building Sunday afternoon. We could not get it done in time for Monday morning. I will be using the same regulation of health and safety of the children. I will need a resolution for this one as well.

Discussion of wavier from RIDE for one school day for Cranston High School West and Cranston Area Career & Technical Center

Dr. Lundsten stated - I will need another waiver for Cranston High School West for the day we lost electrical power. We could not get

the building opened for heating and lightening purposes. It was not safe.

Once you approve the above waivers Monday night, I will get the letters out Tuesday morning.

Mr. Traficante stated – What is going to happen in the future with Orchard Farms?

Dr. Lundsten stated – Ed (Collins) and I have been talking about that and right now we have to wait until the snow melts, but in the Spring we are going to come forward with a plan and we are going to have to fix that roof. What he (Ed Collins) discussed with me is moving the shingles off the bottom three-four feet and putting flashing down and recovering it. Then where the valleys are, take the shingles off of there and put a piece of aluminum on there so the water will run down. This has to be addressed. We have ceilings coming down. We have Clean Care in there and I have had the air tested regularly. We can't continue like this and it is out of warranty and over 10 years old. There is some damage. We lost computers. Some teachers lost materials.

Discussion of calendar survey results

Dr. Lundsten spoke on the calendar survey results (see Handouts J and K on file with the Superintendent's office for further information).

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Traficante; seconded by Mr. Wall. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie A. G. Culhane

Vice Chairperson

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STUDENT RETENTION POLICY POLICY #5149(a)

STUDENT RETENTION POLICY

This will replace policy #5149.

Parents/Guardians will be notified in writing by the end of the third quarter (on or about April 1st) if there is a chance that their child may be retained in their current grade for the next school year. For students who enroll after the second quarter, the notice of retention to the parent may be given after the end of the third quarter.

Elementary /Middle School

In general, students will be placed at the grade level to which they are best adjusted academically, socially and emotionally. Students will usually progress annually from grade to grade, spending one year in each grade. However, some students will profit by staying another year in the same grade. In such cases, the parent will be contacted in

advance, although the final decision will rest with the school authorities.

A final decision will be made at the end of the school year. Parent(s) will be notified of the final decision by email and certified letter.

If a parent disagrees with the decision to retain or not to retain a student, the parent may appeal the decision in accordance with the following:

Retention Decision Appeal Process

- 1. If the parents or guardians want to appeal the principal's decision they must do so in writing, within 10 school days of receiving the principal's letter, to the superintendent or designee.**
- 2. The parents or guardians shall be informed by written notice, in their dominant language, of a hearing with the superintendent or designee.**
- 3. All parties involved may be represented by legal counsel.**
- 4. The parties will be given an opportunity to present their reasons why they recommend or dispute retention of the student.**
- 5. The hearing will be conducted by the superintendent or designee who shall make a determination based on evidence presented at the hearing.**
- 6. The superintendent or designee will provide within 10 school days, a written decision to all parties, as to whether the student shall be**

retained.

7. The decision of the superintendent or designee will be translated to the dominant language of the parent(s) or guardian and sent to the parent(s) or guardians.

8. Parent(s) may appeal the decision of the superintendent or designee to the School Committee.

**First Reading: December 8, 2014 CRANSTON PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

Resolution No. 14-12-19 CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND

Second Reading: January 20, 2015

Resolution No. 15-01-19