

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence High School

2000 Pawtucket Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

January 8, 2008

Open Session

Mrs. Morris called the meeting to order at 5:00PM. Three members were in attendance Stephen DeCastro, Robert Faria, and Mildred Morris. (Eileen Lovett and Steven Santos were absent). Also in attendance: Dr. Jacqueline B. Forbes, Superintendent, Andrew Thomas, Esq. and Robert Silva, Esq. (arrived later). A motion was made by Mr. Faria to move to Executive Session in accordance with RI General Laws, Section 42-46-5 (a) (1) Personnel, (a) (2) Collective Bargaining/Litigation, (a) (8) Student Discipline, seconded by Mr. DeCastro.

Public Session reconvened at 7:50PM in the Library; the meeting was moved to the Auditorium. School Committee members in attendance: Stephen DeCastro, Robert Faria, Steven Santos, and Mildred Morris. A motion was made by Mr. Faria to return to open session and to seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mr. Santos. Vote 4-0. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Moment of Silence was

observed.

Record of Previous Meetings – A motion was made by Mr. Faria to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2007 meeting, seconded by Mr. DeCastro. Vote 4-0.

Chair's Report – Mrs. Morris wished everyone a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year. Mrs. Lovett was not in attendance due to illness.

Student Liaison – Anne Monagle presented a report on high school events and activities.

Hearings - None

Reading of Communications – Mr. Santos read into the record a letter received from Patrick & Joan Caine of East Providence requesting that boys' lacrosse be added to the spring sports schedule for 2007-08. Dr. Forbes explained that she has been in touch with the Athletic Director, Mr. Amaral, regarding this request and outlined her issues: sport must be for both boys' and girls' teams; we must have funds coming forward on an annual basis; School Committee must retain the right to suspend the sport at any time; the amount of money needed is closer to \$8,000 than \$6,000; coaching stipend based on contract and subject to bid process. Mr. Amaral, Athletic Director, was present to answer questions. He felt the letter framed the enthusiasm of the sport and will benefit the community; lacrosse

actually goes back to March two years ago; the schedule for spring sports is now being completed and the timing of implementation is very important. An analysis shows the amount needed is closer to \$8-9,000 for both programs with bus transportation. Mr. DeCastro commended the Athletic Director and Mr. Caine; the School Committee should support this anyway and he hoped that the Superintendent can find a couple of thousand dollars to support this. Mrs. Morris said fundraising might be able to make up the difference. Mr. Faria asked if field space were available. Mr. Caine addressed the School Committee; his son is on the lacrosse team, he wanted to support this and will try to fundraise the difference, but he will guarantee the funds he offered. He thanked the School Committee for their support. A motion was made by Mr. DeCastro to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent to support this endeavor, seconded by Mr. /Faria.

Vote 4-0.

Report of Superintendent and Staff

Dr. Forbes thanked Mr. Caine for his support, welcomed everyone to the high school and extended appreciation to the School Committee for agreeing to hold the January meeting at the High School to accommodate the administrators' version of a School Committee

Field Trip. Dr. Forbes related that we are the largest high school in the state, which will be undergoing a NEASC accreditation process that will examine the strengths and needs of the school. Dr. Forbes was pleased that tonight the administration and faculty members of the high school will be making presentations that will showcase the school's various programs and she looked forward to hearing them. Dr. Forbes welcomed back the district's Director of Human Resources, Mr. Lonnie Barham, who has been away for five years supporting our country in its efforts against global terrorism. She also recognized and thanked Mrs. Diane Rodericks who served as the Interim Director of Human Resources dually while continuing as Benefits Coordinator.

FY 2007-08 Financial Report – Mr. Capron stated that the December 2007 report shows a projected deficit of \$3.3 Million. Mr. DeCastro asked about equipment and capital on page 6; the percentage spent is in excess of last year. Mr. Capron answered that most are paid once per year and it may have been paid earlier this year than last. Mr. DeCastro noted that we are still showing a \$3.3 million dollar shortfall. Mr. Faria noted that East Bay is already 100% spent. Mr. Capron explained there is one yearly assessment bill and it was paid earlier than last year.

Mr. Santos related that a couple sessions back Mr. Silva, Esq. mentioned the personal and public liability of the School Committee laws referencing budgets.

Mr. Silva explained that all School Committees are responsible for obeying the laws of RI and the School Committee is not allowed to operate with budgets in deficit. If violated, there may be sanctions, but he was not sure who would be the entity with standing to bring it forward and who would have the interest to bring an alleged violation forward. If a deliberate act by the School Committee and if continued willfully, it would be a violation of the law and the School Committee could be called to task; he was not sure of the remedy mandating the School Committee. An individual School Committee member must carry out the duties in Chapter 16 of the RI General Laws, which is to carry out a free and appropriate education for the students of East Providence. In the event they are not able to accomplish that, Mr. Silva was not in a position to say what would happen; they would all be responsible as citizens for actions taken collectively as a School Committee and personally; for no other purpose than to obey rules of the road. If the School Committee decides not to take an action; the Caruolo Act provides a remedy and requires the Superintendent to notify the City of a pending deficit, to make the Auditor General aware of it, make a demand on the City for additional money. The next step would be to bring this to Superior Court to validate that the School Committee's request is appropriate. Irrespective of what happens, the School Committee is to try to bring this to the fore; if the decision is not to avail oneself, there is always the possibility of some liability and the potential of personal liability, but this may never come to the fore. Mr. Silva said he has to apply

alternative consequences. He felt that the meeting last night with the City Council was productive; there is a deficit/shortfall of both parties and this was articulated by Mr. Conley, City Solicitor, who explained that it does not make much difference if the deficit is on one side of the ledger or the other; the deficit is a joint problem to be shared equally. The Superintendent will begin to see where we are and certain things need to be done and there are consequences for not doing them in the right way.

Mr. Santos made a motion that the School Committee instruct the Superintendent not to deficit spend and to correct any problems in the budget as she sees fit to make sure the School Department does not deficit spend, seconded by Mr. Faria. Discussion: Mr. DeCastro said he would like to hold off on supporting this for now, since it was decided at the joint City Council, School Committee meeting last night that the City Manager and Superintendent would get together to develop a plan and we need to wait and see to determine their plan of attack. He sees cooperation on both sides and between the two, he believes they can come up with solutions. He would like to wait until after that meeting; he might support this in the future. We will probably not deficit spend until August or so and have a little time to work out a plan. He would like to see what is not going to be paid. Mr. Santos said he needs to make it clear that the School Committee will not deficit spend; he is not trying to obstruct the City Manager and Superintendent, just reaffirming not to deficit spend. Mr. Faria said that reductions were made of about \$2.8 million and it was

thought to be adequate; then the City Council further reduced the budget and those figures have caused further problems. Mrs. Morris agreed that after Monday's meeting, the Superintendent and City Manager will be meeting along with Mr. Capron and she will go along with Mr. DeCastro to wait and see the outcome of their meeting. Mr. Faria felt that the School Committee would have to make some decision going forward. Roll Call Vote: Mr. DeCastro, nay; Mr. Faria, aye; Mr. Santos, aye; Mrs. Morris, nay. Vote 2-2.

Personnel Recommendations – Mr. Lonnie Barham, Director of Human Resources presented the following personnel items:

APPOINTMENTS

Daniel Cabral Assistant Girl's Basketball Coach, EPHS

Motion: Mr. Faria/Second: Mr. DeCastro. Vote 4-0.

RETIREMENTS

Robert Cavallaro (34 yrs.) Guidance Counselor, RMS

Close of 2007-2008 School year

Lynn Collins-Tori (34 yrs.) Kindergarten Teacher, Orlo Ave. School

Close of 2007-2008 School year

Jane Maaia Cotter (32 yrs.)

Transition Coordinator/LEA, Spec.

Services Dept.

Close of 2007-2008 School year

William Flanagan (32 yrs.) Social Studies Teacher, RMS

Close of 2007-2008 School year

Lynn Rakatansky (32 yrs.) Math Teacher, RMS

Close of 2007-2008 School year

James Rose (32 ½ yrs.) Physical Education Teacher, EPHS

Close of 2007-2008 School year

Marilyn Whittet (31 yrs.) Foreign Language Teacher, EPHS

Close of 2007-2008 School year

Motion: Mr. Santos/Second: Mr. Faria. Vote 4-0.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Anne-Marie Scott Special Education Teacher, RMS

(Starting approximately 3/1/08 up to thirteen weeks)

Motion: Mr. Santos/Second: Mr. Faria. Vote 4-0.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Ray Francis Maintenance Mechanic A- (1 yr. only)

Motion: Mr. DeCastro/Second: Mr. Faria. Vote 4-0 (Position to

remain unfilled)

Mrs. Morris thanked the retirees for their dedicated service. Mr. Santos asked about posting the names of prospective personnel before School Committee meetings take place. Mr. Silva advised that the School Committee is required to advertise at a substantial cost; he suggested if and when placing public notices at City Hall, Administration Building, and on the Secretary of State Website, this could include a list attached to the public notice, so we would not incur the expense of additional advertising in the Journal. This is a policy matter and the School Committee should consider whether to go forward with the request.

Facilities Update – Mr. Joseph Tavares reported that although there are still minor adjustments being made with the new boilers at the high school, there have been no major problems with the system. There is still a problem with an insufficient amount of vehicles and during the recent snow storm, one of the vehicles was totaled. There are now only five vehicles available for plowing, which could make it difficult to complete snow clean up in a timely fashion. During the vacation, painting and other cleanup was completed at Riverside Middle School in anticipation of the SALT visit. Mrs. Morris thought the City Manager had agreed to use one of the city plows with a city driver to assist with snow removal. Mr. Tavares related that there would be a conflict between the two unions and we would need to make some arrangement, as this affects the overtime wages of his

department. Mr. Faria inquired about a fence pole at Kent Heights in need of repair; he asked if other fences in the district could also be checked. Mr. DeCastro asked if anything could be done about floor tiles at the high school, which are in need of replacement; could we brighten up the tiles or replace them. Mr. Tavares advised that there was an allowance for this in the budget a couple of years ago. Mr. DeCastro thought we could look at epoxy coating to brighten up the hall ways. Mr. Tavares felt this might involve asbestos abatement. Dr. Forbes said a new floor was poured near the high school gym last year. Mr. DeCastro asked that we obtain quotes and possibly include this item in next year's budget. Dr. Forbes related that the five year facilities plan included replacements for flooring and asked Mr. Tavares to refer to the plan.

Requests for Home Schooling – None

Field Trip Requests – Ms. Wallace, Assistant Principal at Martin Middle School requested approval for students to travel to New Hampshire for a Ski/Snowboard Day on 1/26/08. Mr. Faria asked for verification on the number of chaperones. Motion: Mr. Faria/Second: Mr. Santos. Vote 4-0.

Curriculum Report – Mr. Daft reported that the School Committee meeting was planned at East Providence High School in order to report on the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process and Performance Based Graduation

Requirements.

Also, Riverside Middle School is currently going through the SALT process through Friday; the report will be completed in two months. The State released High School classifications and erroneously reported that the high school was on watch status. He reported that the High School did meet adequate yearly progress; however, district aggregate scores did not meet AYP (adequate yearly progress) because of outplaced students including those placed by DCYF and significantly disabled students who are out sourced and not educated by us. Mr. Daft will work on ELL (English Language Learners) scores and how to address the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) students.

Mr. DeCastro advised that the Superintendent informed the School Committee and provided information regarding this and he has every confidence that Dr. Forbes and her team will address these issues.

Dr. Caswell provided an update on Advanced Placement Accreditation; all A/P Class teachers were submitted for approval and were approved. Mr. Greg Amore, teacher of A/P History at the high school reported that East Providence student representative, Miranda Cummings, will represent the state after participating in the U.S. Senate Youth Test; this is the second year in a row that East Providence has represented the State in the Senate Youth competition, which involves both a written test and an interview process.

Dr. Caswell reported on the NEASC accreditation process beginning on March 28th through April 2, 2008. All School Committee will be invited to meet with the team; the self-study has been submitted. The School Committee was provided with a packet of the schedule and the December, 2007 NEASC report. Dr. Forbes asked that the mission statement be read: “The East Providence High School community believes that excellence in education is the pathway to the future. Our goal is to instill a passion for learning and a sense of responsibility in all students. Teachers working with families ensure that every student’s transition to society is personal and meaningful. Students, administrators, faculty, and staff are part of a culture promoting a safe environment to explore new ideas, meet new challenges, respect diversity and contribute to the community.”

Dr. Caswell requested that Mr. Larry Izzi, PBGR Coordinator, present the guidelines on the new Performance Based Graduation Requirements, which have been implemented at East Providence High School. Mr. Izzi explained the RIDE Portfolio and Senior Project, beginning with the Class of 2011; students have been actively instructed on the new graduation requirements. In the Senior Class of 2008, 27 students have not completed the portfolio; 13 failed classes in the first quarter and were offered summer school; parents were notified of deficiencies and face-to-face meetings were held to let parents know about the report card-portfolio and where their student is in that status. There has been an effective communication

system to report any deficiencies. Moving forward with the process, next week a meeting will be held with RIDE; no school has received full approval yet. Mr. DeCastro asked about notifying all parents and Mr. Izzi provided reassurance that there is constant contact with parents. Dr. Caswell explained that the five day mandatory summer school has been successful and that she will have face to face meetings in the next month. Students who do not fulfill the requirements will not graduate this June.

Pat Dionne and Chris Caffrey, Senior Project Coordinators provided a brief update on the progress of Senior Projects; a handout was provided to School Committee members. Mr. Faria asked about mentors. Ms. Dionne explained that names of mentors will be provided for students to contact mentors and that information will be available on line.

Rob Perry provided an update on technology at the High School. Forty teachers participated in RITTI Training which provides funds for classroom technology; high school teachers are using email effectively. The district is in need of a positive plan for maintenance and Ms. Fox, Technology Director, is working on this. Mr. DeCastro applauded the efforts of technology; by implementing more technology, we can produce more electronically which can realize savings in the budget.

Dr. Caswell ended by stating that teachers in the high school are

working hard in the classrooms. Dr. Forbes announced that a classroom visit had been planned to Mr. Monagle's classroom for a Smart Board Demonstration. The meeting recessed to move to the classroom demonstration; a motion was made by Mr. DeCastro, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 4-0.

The School Committee reconvened at 9:55PM; a motion was made by Mr. Faria, seconded by Mr. Santos to return to open session. Vote 4-0.

Report of Sub-Committees - None

Unfinished Business

Nepotism Policy - Mr. Santos explained that the policy was referred to legal counsel, Mr. Silva, and he asked to hold discussion on the matter until the February meeting. Mr. Santos said he has received feedback from the community regarding the need for this policy.. A motion was made by Mr. Santos to table the item, seconded by Mr. Faria to take up the matter at the next meeting. Vote 4-0.

Budget Workshop - Mr. DeCastro related that the City Manager and the Superintendent will be meeting this week; we have a huge problem of a \$3.2 million deficit. As we have all come to understand, and as explained by Mr. Conley, City Solicitor, using the Caruolo Act or not, the problem goes from one side of the ledger to the other. We

would have to spend money and it really does not accomplish anything. The City Council understands the problems we have and is cooperative; there are no particular solutions, but his concern is that even if there is a \$3.2 million miraculous influx of funds, we will be right back there next year. Going forward we need to know where we are going; the state is giving less and less money; are we going to do this every year. This is ongoing and continuing and it appears it will continue and we need to figure out how to stay within the 3.5% cap, because there is no support to exceed the cap or give any additional money. Another meeting will be held; if not, the Auditor General may step in to solve the problem.

Dress Code - Mrs. Morris placed this item on the agenda. A Connect-Ed parental survey, presented by Mr. Rodericks, indicated that in grades Kindergarten through 8, most parents were interested in the program (results indicated that 51.9% said yes; 31.6% said no; 16.5% needed more information on the program). Mrs. Morris believed this is worth pursuing and looking into and wanted to implement this in September. She suggested getting a committee together with representation from all the schools and proceed from there. Mr. Rodericks suggested doing this voluntarily; send forms home and it is up to each school on a voluntary basis. Schools can go ahead for September and the topic can be discussed at an administrators meeting. Mr. Faria made a motion to proceed with getting the program going as a voluntary program, seconded by Mr. DeCastro. Mr. Santos questioned how vendors would be chosen;

(leave up to discretion of the schools); he had a concern with locking in with a vendor, but otherwise has no problem with this idea. Dr. Forbes asked for clarification as we already have a voluntary program in place through the PTA's. Mrs. Morris wanted to get it in place for September and she has been asked about it and she feels it helps with discipline, etc. and wants it to move forward. Dr. Forbes supports this voluntary school project, which is already underway, but perhaps the idea needs to be re-vitalized and School Committee is reaffirming their support for this. Dr. Forbes will assist and support the PTA's voluntary program and School Committee has her support. Mrs. Morris said there is a need to involve the PTA's and hopes it goes well. Vote 4-0.

New Business

V.D.1. Code of Student Conduct – Amended Policy – First Passage – Mr. Daft reported that the change to the policy involves a class two hallucinogenic substance; RI law has nothing on the books and the policy needs to be amended to include this type of substance. Mr. DeCastro asked about the legalities. Dr. Forbes explained that it has been reviewed by counsel and is acceptable; the policy change will be implemented after a second passage. A motion was made by Mr. Faria, seconded by Mr. Santos. Roll call vote: Mr. DeCastro, aye; Mr. Faria, aye; Mr. Santos, aye; Mrs. Morris, aye.

Student Assessments - Mr. DeCastro asked to discuss testing

procedures and how students are assessed, since we do not pre-test or post-test at the same grade level, but only once a year in October. He thinks if we can test early in the school year and then again in May to see where we started and where we ended up, we will be looking for continuous improvement; this would be good for public support and would provide quantitative evidence. He believes it would be helpful to administrators to see what kind of progress a student achieves in a given year, but it is a question of spending funds for testing. Dr. Forbes explained that we have moved away from the criterion of pre and post testing and do reference-based testing. At the February meeting, Mr. Daft and Ms. Salzillo, Reading Coordinator, will share a variety of ongoing assessments and standardized tests and will share with the School Committee a presentation on standards-based performance learning. Dr. Forbes would like to demonstrate what is done now and if any problems with assessment, we can develop a plan. Mr. Daft provided details of testing results. Mr. DeCastro thought teachers would want to know how students did and as a parent, he would want to know where the child started and where they end up. Mr. Faria has fear of too much testing and not enough curriculum. Dr. Forbes reiterated that testing is now performance-based ; evidence is collected in portfolios and shows the total picture of a student's progress. The trend is an on-going performance basis and we do that now. Mrs. Morris asked about quarterly progress reports. Dr. Forbes will provide new performance based report cards along with learner framework to the School Committee at the February meeting.

Privatization - Mr. DeCastro asked for a legal opinion on what positions can be privatized in the School Department and what is limited; such as aides, teachers, etc. He believes the School Committee needs to think outside of the box and should reduce teachers with declining enrollment. He would like a legal opinion on this from counsel. Mrs. Morris said she called RI Department of Education and we cannot privatize teachers due to a 1946 law regarding teacher tenure. He would still like an opinion from counsel; if we have twenty openings and Sylvan could fill them at X\$, would it make more sense to hire a temp? Mr. Faria commented that if Mr. DeCastro asked for a legal opinion as to what can or cannot be done, we have to ask the questions. A motion was made by Mr. DeCastro that legal counsel research all employees contracted or otherwise, as to what can or cannot be privatized according to the law, seconded by Mr. Faria. Mr. Santos agreed to ask for an opinion. Vote 4-0. Mrs. Morris said she has a lot of admiration for the teachers in the community and she thinks this is an insult to teachers.

Agenda Change – Educational Program Showcase - Mr. Faria advised that in the past, there were showcases from each school and he would like a space early on the agenda for that type of presentation, since there are so many diverse things happening in the school district. Mrs. Morris sees no reason why we cannot move the item up on the agenda under Moment of Silence, to accommodate students. Mr. Faria would like to change the policy and would to

bring first passage to the next meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Faria to add “Educational Program Showcase to the agenda, seconded by Mr. Santos. Roll call vote: Mr. DeCastro, aye; Mr. Faria, aye; Mrs. Santos, aye; Mrs. Morris, aye.

School Improvement Team Procedures - Mr. Faria sees this as an important issue to have a liaison from the School Committee to the School Improvement Team as a supportive role and to provide insight, and for use as a reporting tool. The School Committee needs to support and assist SIT Teams. Dr. Forbes provided him with the district procedures regarding involvement on School Improvement Teams; he thinks going forward there needs to be a presence through the school district in an unrestricted forum and School Committee needs to be able to be involved. Mr. Santos thought it would be positive to be more interactive and informal. Mrs. Morris agreed and if Mr. Faria would like to be the School Committee representative, perhaps he could resign as City Council liaison and Mr. Santos can assume that duty. Dr. Forbes explained that procedures are put into place regarding SIT Teams, what is going on and to give support. SIT team meetings are listed on the activities calendars. Dr. Forbes said she can work out the details. Dr. Forbes asked Mr. Faria to also serve with the Strategic Planning Group.

Payment of Bills

Mr. Faria spoke regarding the status of bill paying and the fact that

Mr. Brown, City Manager, advised at a meeting that the School Department has to notify the city when there is insufficient funds to pay bills or when more money is needed to meet obligations. Mr. Capron explained there is a monthly allowance to pay the bills; city has given us more of an allowance now to catch up on the bills, but we will fall behind again later. Dr. Forbes explained that the cash flow problem has been around for decades and that Mr. Capron and Mr. McDonald, Finance Director for the city, will work it out. Mr. DeCastro does not think it is an issue; there could be more cash flow, if the issue is brought to the city's attention. If this continues, the School Department needs to find out if the City Manager can resolve it, but we need to be more proactive. Mr. Santos commented that we are probably not taking advantage of vendor discounts, if bills are being paid late.

Payment of Bills

Local Operating Bill List:

Warrant #000788 1/3/08 \$ 700,341.54

Motion: Mr. DeCastro/Second: Mr. Faria. Vote 4-0.

Warrant #000789 1/3/08 \$ 1,800,045.84

Motion: Mr. DeCastro/Second: Mr. Faria. Vote 4-0

Federal Bill List:

Warrant #000787 1/3/08 \$ 298,341.16

Motion: Mr. Faria/Second: Mr. DeCastro. Vote 4-0.

Question and Answer Period

Mr. Tony Gouveia applauds the attempt to think outside of the box, but he sees life long erosion of the community by closing schools, building more condos and by not promoting community . He believes that the police, fire, and teachers are part of the community and would not think of East Providence having a volunteer fire department or Pinkerton serving as policemen as these individuals are part of the community; by privatizing a core group of the community is not thinking outside of the box, it is just a blanket statement which is offensive and he asked to get off the soap box.

Mr. Fahey asked questions regarding the deficit: what is standard for being in deficit; what accounting standards are we held to and what is our understanding of our accounting period. At the last meeting, regarding discussion about accounts payable, he asked why software cannot work for accounts payable and what are the limitations of the hardware/software. He referenced a statement made about a pile of bills or accounts payable which had not been calculated yet. Mr. Faria tried to explain that it concerns the batch run, which can only process so much at one time Mr. Fahey asked for an explanation of \$2.4 million in bills, which had been mentioned. Mr. Faria said the

bigger issue is how we fix this in the future and there is communication between the city and the School Department about the need to communicate when an issue arises.

A motion was made by Mr. DeCastro to adjourn at 11:00PM, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Eileen Lovett, Clerk of the Committee