

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence City Hall

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

School Committee Meeting

February 10, 2009

Open Session

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00PM. School Committee Members Present: Luisa Abatecola, Shannon Barbosa, Anthony Carcieri, Robert Faria, Steven Santos. Also present: Dr. Mario Cirillo, Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Edward Daft, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Lonnie Barham, Director of Human Resources, Mr. Daniel Kinder, Esq. A motion was made by Mr. Santos to move to Executive Session for purposes of discussing:

Personnel: Two Individuals – R.I. General Laws § Section 42-46-5 (a)(1)

Collective Bargaining: Teachers' Contract, Teacher Assistants' Contract and Custodians' Contract – R.I. General Laws § Section 42-46-5 (a) (2)

Litigation: R.I. General Laws § Section 42-46-5 (a) (2)

Motion seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.

School Committee returned to Open Session at 7:35PM. Mr. Caricieri

called the meeting to order. A motion was made to seal the minutes of the executive session by Mrs. Barbosa, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Student/Teacher Recognition- Mr. Barham recognized Sara Perry, a student at Whiteknact Elementary School, for her participation in the Narragansett Bay Commission poster contest and Melissa Guillet, an art teacher, who has been very successful in writing and receiving grants for the art program at Waddington School.

Student Liaison – Erin Butler presented a report.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

A motion was made by Mrs. Barbosa to approve the minutes of the meetings held on December 30, 2008 and January 13, 2009, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.

Sub-Committee Report – None

Communications – Mr. Faria commented on the great information included in the Superintendent’s monthly report, Leadership Links, and he reviewed some of the items.

A speaker requested a point of order regarding the open meeting; he asked the School Committee to suspend the meeting and to

reconvene at the High School. Attorney Kinder advised that the meeting reconvened and was lawful; it was not necessary to convene any other place since the meeting was advertised at City Hall.

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

APPOINTMENTS

Susan Coffey 2/5 – Occupational Therapist- Location –TBD

Amanda Alferos Social Studies Teacher- High School

Meredeth Sousa Supervisory Assistant – Location TBD

Isabel Salzillo Supervisory Assistant – Location TBD

Motion: Mr. Faria/Second: Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

TEMPORARY RECALL OF SECRETARY

Gail Costa Medical Insurance Reimbursement (one month)

Benefits Clerical Support (Approx. one month)

Motion: Mrs. Barbosa/Second: Mr. Santos. Vote 5-0.

RETIREMENTS

Barbara Allen (33) or earlier* Guidance Counselor-Riverside Middle School

Karen Brill (23) Kindergarten –Oldham Elementary

Peter Hoopis (23) Social Studies-EPHS (1/26/09)

Cecilia Lowell (14) Bus Assistant (1/14/09)

Dorothy Ruggieri (11) Bus Assistant (2/6/09)

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Melissa Aniello (Parental) Speech/Language
Pathologist-Meadowcrest**

Mary Snow (FMLA) Resource Teacher – Martin Middle School

Approx. 02/10/09 for up to 13 weeks

**Kelley Richardson (FMLA) 7th Grade English Teacher – Martin
Middle School - Approx. 03/16/09 for 13 weeks**

**Susan Chapkounian (FMLA) Business Teacher – Riverside Middle
School**

Approx 05/04/09 for remainder of school year

Cari Ravo (Personal) Head Coach-Girls Track-Martin Middle School

One year only

Alex Butler (Personal) Asst Coach – Boys Volleyball – High School

One year only

**Meredith Kinash (Personal) Speech/Language
Pathologist-Whiteknact**

Effective 02/13/09-remainder of 08-09 School Year

EXTENDED PERSONAL LEAVE

Jason Silveira (Year 2) Band Director – High School

2009-10 School Year

JOB SHARE

Joanne Hall/Jen McGovern Grade 2 –Kent Heights

2009-10 School Year

Mr. Barham reviewed the early retirement offer by the EPEA; the Superintendent recommended approval of the offer of early retirement for eligible teachers to retire effective February 13, 2009 under the terms of the teachers' contract that was in effect during 2005-2008. The highlights are as follows: 15 teachers have volunteered; 14 have volunteered to return as long-term substitutes for the remainder of the school year. The Retirement Board has agreed to allow teachers to return after a thirty day break- accounting for February school break, absence from their classrooms will only be for three weeks; 75% of classrooms have already been filled for the three weeks with previously retired teachers. Savings this fiscal year from these retirements will be approximately \$450,000. Additional costs in future years will be approximately \$82,500 per year over the next seven years for a total of \$578,000. Due to the current fiscal crisis, approval was recommended for a short term relief. A motion was made to approve by Ms. Barbosa, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.

Discussion took place regarding the impact of what the cost would be for these retirees to stay on for two to three more years. (\$450,000 this year's savings; first two months of school year \$500,000). Dr. Cirillo advised that the proposal he recommended impacts the high school to a great extent; however, the positions can be filled for a short period of three weeks of school in February/March. Mr. Barham

advised that the Principal, Dr. Caswell, has contacted retirees who will serve as substitutes while the retirees serve the thirty day break required by the Retirement Board. Vote Shannon/Bob Faria

Mr. Barham read the names of the retirees; no vote taken.

RETIREMENTS EFFECTIVE 02/13/09* (Under terms of 2005-2008 Teacher Contract)

Donna Lord (40) Kindergarten Teacher - Waddington

Ellen-Ann Higginbotham (38) English Teacher-EPHS

Christine Miga (35) Guidance Counselor Chair-EPHS

David Shadrick (35) Social Studies Dept Chair-EPHS

Michelle Brousseau (33) Math Dept. Chair - EPHS

James Dwyer (33) Computer Technology-Martin Middle School

Patricia Armstrong (32) English Dept Chair –EPHS

Jean Petisce-Lynch (31) Art – Martin Middle School

Patricia Hawksley (30) Business Dept. Chair – EPHS (Tentative – will decide 2/11/09)

Debra Bellamy (28) Physical Education Teacher – EPHS

Kristine Rose (27) Physical Education Teacher – EPHS

Thomas Doyle (25) Social Studies Teacher – EPHS

Kim McGovern (24) Social Studies Teacher – EPHS

Kathleen Hawke (21) Librarian - EPHS

Financial Report - Mr. Barham reported as follows:

Total unpaid bills – \$8.4 Million (over \$3.2 Million over 90 days)

Still tracking for about \$1.2 Million deficit at the end of FY09

Tracking correctly for salary expenditures. Should be at 25% - is at 25.88%

Benefits - We are overspent for benefits 34%; should be at 23%

Overall we are tracking close at 27.49% (2.49% overspent)

Educational Program Report – Dr. Cirillo reported that although there was overall improvement in the district on the NECAP testing, there were obvious pockets of sophistication; some schools are doing very well. He congratulated Francis School and Whiteknact School as the most improved in the district. This dovetails with the NEASC report at the high school which indicated the need to be more focused and we are looking to address these gaps: professional development; periodic ongoing assessment; look at test protocol; become a data driven district; address lesson analysis gaps.

Mr. Edward Daft explained that the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) tests were administered in October 2008 and the results posted on the RI Department of Education website. The NECAP tests were designed to measure student performance against the learning goals described in the Grade Level Expectations. There are four achievement levels: Proficient with Distinction, Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Substantially below Proficient. Although the scores indicated great results and

improvement and most saw increases, there is room for further improvement.

Dr. Cirillo presented a proposed Administrative Restructuring Plan indicating three major areas of administrative leadership necessary for educational success in the school district:

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment & Professional Development, Education Services, and Support Services. He provided an overview through a PowerPoint Presentation.

Mr. Faria asked how this organizational chart would work versus the one presented by a previous administrator. Dr. Cirillo explained the challenges he was presented with in the district when he arrived, mainly the budget; he believed we will get through this and become a better district. Some current positions are not cost effective and this restructuring will provide for a better, smarter, focused and more efficient organization. Mr. Faria asked about technology; will we look at duplication of services, as we need to use every resource to full capacity.

Dr. Cirillo said it is unconscionable not to have technology in our schools; all positions are provided for in the organizational chart with full job descriptions. There is a great need to upgrade technology to support our students.

Mr. Faria asked about special education programs and discussion took place regarding the need to take inclusion into consideration, as the Special Education Advisory Committee has helped him to have a better understanding of those needs and we can't forget about that.

Dr. Cirillo related that the District Partnership Committee included Bradley Hospital as a full partner and we are working very closely on an imbedded model to bring kids back; we are looking at the Watters building and Martin Middle School as possible sites.

Dr. Cirillo explained additional elements of the plan and his vision for the future.

A motion was made by Mr. Faria to approve the first reading of the plan, seconded by Mrs. Barbosa. Vote 5-0.

New Business

I.E. School Committee By-Laws – Amended policy, second passage. A motion was made by Ms. Barbosa to approve, seconded by Mr. Faria. Vote 5-0.

Committee Assignments – A motion was made by Mrs. Barbosa, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0. The School Committee Chair will make the appointments at a later meeting.

Payment of Bills

Federal Grants

Warrant #000888 2/6/09 \$ 507,230.75

Motion: Mrs. Abatecola/Second: Mrs. Barbosa. Vote 5-0.

General Fund

Warrant #0008887 2/5/09 \$1,888,100.49

Motion: Mr. Faria/Second: Mrs. Barbosa. Vote 5-0.

Public Comment

Shannon Barbosa spoke as a parent regarding the Whiteknact NECAP scores which are under investigation by RIDE.

Tony Gouveia had a concern with the method being used by the School Committee in negotiations; two parties have to work together and no one comes out with everything they want. This is more of a dictatorship and he had a concern for the students. On the list of people who accepted a buyout, discussion centered on money and not the impact on students; not one School Committee member advocated for kid. The retirees include some very important people at the high school and no one seemed concerned about the educational impact. He always complained that no one had the guts to move the meeting.

Mark Correia – a junior at East Providence high school said from his

perspective as a student, the school is his second home with teachers as guardians and this hurts; if money is the issue, they deserve the most; he had a concern about new teachers coming in and his teachers leaving.

Mr. Barham related that the retirements were initiated by the East Providence Education Association and the NEA; the teachers union asked for this and will have their benefits. This agreement was not initiated by the school administration.

Valerie Lawson – President of the EPEA – Wood Hollow Lane – Said it was unfortunate the meeting was held at City Hall and the School Committee chose not to accommodate residents and School Department employees by moving to the high school. Mr. Carcieri chose not to move in order to limit participation; School Committee meetings should be public. The School Committee is not bargaining in good faith and should not implement terms unilaterally. They are willing to address these items at the bargaining table, not unilaterally. She thanked residents for positive feedback; it was the actions of the School Committee which brought about retirements.

Dena Tsonos – a teacher at Hennessey talked about the Positive Behavior Program at their school which teachers respect and the fact that teachers empower kids to stand up for themselves. The pay cut of 5% pay was emotional; the School Committee poked the teachers and they do not like it.

Kim Paiva – spoke as a taxpayer, parent, and teacher said that teachers in East Providence are talented individuals and part of an incredible teaching team. She referred to a letter from a Greenwood Ave resident who said that all educators were thugs.

Richard Martin – Class of 1974 and resident of East Providence felt this has become personal and someone is needed from the middle; it has gone far enough before going too far; he offered to help, but was not sure of the entire solution; he is waiting for a person from the middle who will meet half way. He is invested in this town and awaits a decision.

Bill Murphy, 27 Wetmore – said there is a need for common ground and respect with rational dialogue based on accurate information. Mr. Barham explained the teachers' retirement and his understanding is that there will be no interruption in instruction to students, since they will start and finish the year with the same teacher . He mentioned that someone also suggested that the public was being excluded from this meeting; what about excluding the public from negotiations. He claimed the School Committee did respect the law regarding bargaining rights since they asked in good faith and were at impasse; once the employer exhausts all the possibilities and those criteria are met, the employer can then unilaterally implement consistent with the law. He said it is important to articulate with accurate information and that many arguments presented are not

valid.

The School Committee's arguments are backed up by financial data which drove their actions; it was not to hurt teachers. As far as collective bargaining, there is not much in the way of laws designed to protect taxpayers. He asked why there is no outrage over the operating deficit; arguments have to cut both ways. He contacted Valerie Lawson to have dialogue and he hopes she will consider.

Alana Nelson – chemistry teacher –was concerned about the future of the community and for the need to show integrity to the kids. She asked for teachers to be treated fairly and equitably.

Jack Fahey – Pawtucket Avenue – heard statements about the Labor Board, open negotiations, not bargaining in good faith, signs to tell the truth, restriction of public participation, lack of negotiations by the City, no knowledge of negotiations in public. He researched that 18 states require bargaining in public and he publicly supports the School Committee's stand on public negotiations. We have talked about taxes from the perspective of the School Committee and teachers and all should be committed to transparency.

Jodi Audette – teacher at Martin Middle School had a concern about moving special needs students to Watters, since there would not be inclusion with regular education students.

Kathy Grillo – PTA President at Hennessey said she treasures all

teachers and could not do their job, but she believes that somebody needs to come to middle ground and work as one, because if taxes go up again, she will have to move. Someone needs to stand up and put an end to this, as taxpayers cannot take the hit to bail this out.

Mary Teixeira – teacher at Silver Spring School referred to comments about balancing the budget, which has not been done over ten years; this year it became an issue. The City Manager had a plan for the deficit last year; now there is a roll back of wages and 20% copay; she asked all to take a cut; she does not want to hear teachers caused this. Mr. Carcieri could be part of this and not go on the air; the School Committee has a job to do and the rhetoric now does not get us anywhere; we need to get at the bargaining table and talk, maybe without a lawyer and reasonable people can come up with a solution to the problem. Attacking each other is not good for the kids; teachers go about their work This is not just a teacher problem and she is looking for them to help out and find common ground.

Milred Morris, 419 Dover Avenue – listened to discussion about teachers who retired; as a former member of the School Committee, she appreciates them. Not one School Committee member thanked the teachers for their dedication.

Roy Willis – a 30 year resident of East Providence was a non political person attending his second meeting. He said he would like to remain in the city, but is having a hard time paying his taxes now. He

does not disparage teachers but was afraid from his point of view that the leadership was taking them to a cliff and the kids will lose big time; as a taxpayer, he will not be able to sell out, teachers will lose their jobs, and the city could be looking at bankruptcy. All would stand to lose; the School Committee is making hard choices and he appreciates work of Mr. Carcieri and the School Committee.

Laura Laviano – said that every city in crisis and she would love for her taxes to be lower, but she took a pay cut and this should be done at the bargaining table; everyone knows about paying health insurance. She would like Mr. Carcieri to pay attention to speakers. We cannot put kids in a school by themselves, this is not inclusion.

A motion was made by Mr. Santos to adjourn at 9:50PM, seconded by Mr. Faria.

Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Shannon Barbosa, Clerk of the Committee