

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence High School Cafeteria

2000 Pawtucket Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

January 25, 2011

Open Session

Mr. Charles Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:30PM. School Committee members present: Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi, Charles Tsonos. Also present: Dr. Mario F. Cirillo, Superintendent of Schools.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag & Moment of Silence were observed.

Motion by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Furtado to allow Public Comment; none requested.

Reports: Superintendent's Report

An Overview of the Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements System (PBGR) was presented. Janet Sheehan, Principal of East Providence High with the assistance of Mr. Robert Perry, unveiled the

school's new website and presented details. Mr. Perry thanked student Kimberly DeLande for her assistance with this project.

Dr. Cirillo, Dr. Caswell, and Janet Sheehan presented information through a PowerPoint regarding the Evolution of the PBGR System: highlights included: Past, Present and Future of the Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements, challenges and a plan moving forward.

Discussion:

Mr. Furtado questioned why the Portfolio assignments were dropped down and how they would be aligned with the Career Technical Center program (i.e. how to demonstrate auto tech and landscaping).

Mrs. Rossi asked about the NECAP requirement for students to earn a diploma and what happens to students who get to high school and cannot pass the NECAP test; she asked to place this item on the agenda for further discussion at another meeting.

Dr. Cirillo stated that advocacy groups representing the minority population are asking the same questions and hearings are being held to provide input into the process; this is happening all over the state. He felt that extraordinary work had been done at the high school, but that work still needs to be done; this is a draft document.

Mrs. Rossi thought the process is pigeon holing kids who can't pass

a test.

Dr. Cirillo said this is a three tier system which has drawn criticism and there have been meetings for citizens to air their complaints; we can get questions answered if anyone needs help. The professional association of administrators have taken a stance; providing the best curriculum for kids to succeed is their obligation and that's why these things are being put into place. Ms. Sheehan related that the RI Association of School Principals met with the Commissioner of Education and presented a position paper that things are happening too quickly; representatives of that organization have attended all meetings. Mrs. Rossi received a letter from a mother upset about her student being overwhelmed by the double math and English.

Ms. Sheehan said their primary responsibility is for students to leave school with a certain set of skills and she is committed to kids who come to high school three years behind. Mrs. Rossi asked how they get to high school. Dr. Caswell advised that the practice has been to move students along; research shows that it does not make any difference keeping students back; the graduation rate is 78%. Dr. Cirillo believes this process will go through. Mrs. Rossi asked about the GED Program; would like to revisit.

Mr. Tellier asked why NECAP test scores are not used earlier than high school to identify struggling students; why not develop a plan for the students having difficulties to be identified earlier in their

school career.

Mr. Tsonos felt the system is wrong and puts seniors at risk; as a School Committee, they will pass recommendations along; they do not think the system of testing students at grade 8 and 11 works.

Master Mentor Evaluator Positions – Dr. Caswell advised that positions have been posted and 17 applications were received for five positions. The draft evaluation system from RI Dept. of Education was just released last week; this is part of the Race to the Top overhaul of the evaluation system; the document includes six evaluations per year per teacher per school and there are four ratings in the process. Funding for the positions is an issue of concern and the Superintendent and staff explained that to RI Department of Education; this is a \$96,000 commitment of which we have two positions funded and are presently looking for funding for a third; Dr. Caswell is working with Ride on possibly using mentoring funds.

When this system was first presented, Dr. Cirillo had concerns about the capacity of the district to do this; RIDE gave their view point and this plan presented to Ride, fits with the philosophy to build capacity and professional development goals; this is a good opportunity for people to develop. There is also an option to bring in people from outside, but we felt this plan was a much better way to go. Mrs. Rossi asked how we can add any more positions with a deficit. Discussion regarding how the positions would be funded. Dr. Cirillo thought it

would be a good opportunity; he is confident the cost can be covered, believes it is a far better scenario for our own people, and feels confident to move in this direction. RIDE liked our plan and we will do the best we can; if only three positions can be funded, it is better than what is offered by the state to have retirees come into the district. Further discussion about the plan and the funding to support the positions. Mrs. Rossi would like to revisit the issue.

Mr. Barham explained that the timeline is to select evaluators before March; the interview process has been started; if funding is not available, the principals will be asked to do evaluations.

Ms. Lawson, President of the EPEA, advised that when this plan was rolled out, there were more questions than answers; the Commissioner can ask to get a waiver. At a meeting at RIDE, discussed the Master Mentor Evaluation as an onerous process with lots of unknown concerns; one of the concerns was that department heads should be removed from the process. She and many other educators feel that part of the process should include people certified in certain content areas; this is a work in process and very much in flux.

Financial Report/Budget Update – Tabled to next meeting

Financial Update/TANs – Mr. Barham reported that he and the Superintendent along with two School Committee members met with

the Mayor; the original deficit elimination plan was rejected by the Auditor General and we do not have the money to pay up front; still need a deficit elimination plan to rid us of the deficit and to pay vendors in order to restore services. Proceeding to get the information needed to find out if Tax Anticipation Notes are a viable option and if the city cash flow can support this over a four year period. The Mayor promised to set up a meeting with the city's bond counsel to determine if this is a viable option. In response to Mrs. Rossi's question about Plan B; Mr. Barham advised that if not approved, we will stay with the plan to pay off \$750,000 this year.

Bond/Construction Update – The Building Committee reviewed seven responses to a Request for Proposals for Owner's Project Management, Representation and Commissioning Services for East Providence School District; a subcommittee will gather information, rate the companies, and make a recommendation to the Building Committee which will then be presented to the School Committee at a meeting in March.

Computer Installation Update – Kelly Ahrens, Director of Technology advised that 400 new computers were received on January 14th at the High School; she thanked the maintenance crew for assistance; the H/S library finished; working on Riverside Middle School next week; all by the end of March; will secure tables and rewire labs; everyone

helpful; teachers excited; things doing well; Smart Boards on the way.

Recap: 180 at High school; 90 at RMS, 60 at MMS; 10 at Francis; 15 Smart Boards; plus a few items for special education purposes. Old computers if in good shape will be sent to elementary schools for K-2 (Francis and Waddington) will look at other places where they are needed the most – about 100.

Personnel Schedules – Dr. Cirillo, asked to outline personnel schedules, reported on the general starting time of the school and central office employees. Mrs. Rossi was looking for other schedules such as minutes of meetings held with principals (will be sent). She asked about the schedule for the teachers' contract. Mr. Barham reported that the contract is being worked on; it was ratified by the former School Committee and the union; however, he is working on a few areas and it is just a matter of getting into the documents what was negotiated and ratified. The NEA is reviewing it and when it comes back, it will be closed and signed. The contract expires on 10/31/11. Mr. Barham explained that it is a ratified and functioning contract and the department is eager to start negotiations. A proposed letter to the union can be forwarded to commence negotiations, once legal approve it. Mrs. Rossi asked that it be wrapped up as soon as possible.

Changes to the Recess Policy will be in effect by February 1;

discussion about data tracking form; Mrs. Rossi wanted the original recess policy in effect. Dr. Cirillo explained that we do not have same situation and it is management's right to do this. Mr. Tsonos said the Committee passed a resolution to go back to the recess program and the issue now is the documentation of fifteen minutes teachers will not be accountable for. He asked for legal wording of a resolution. Mrs. Rossi asked for the policy to go back to the way it was; it was agreed to do that, but now there is a sheet to sign. Dr. Cirillo explained that physical education time was expanded; this allows fifteen minutes of unstructured time; there are contractual obligations and we have management rights; we need to collect data; as part of the arrangement, they should list what they are doing. Further discussion regarding not going back to the way it was before – Mrs. Rossi asked how many minutes for recess; where has the 15 minutes changed; they want the original policy minus the check list; can this be the policy of the School Committee? Attorney Silva advised that School Committee can set whatever policy it wants to; he is in transition; met with former attorney Kinder to get his arms around issues and concerns of new School Committee; he has not talked to the Superintendent yet, but he will get back to the School Committee in writing; School Committee has the ultimate decision regarding policy; he has not seen the former policy and needs an opportunity to work with the School Committee. Mrs. Rossi will send to attorney. Mr. Tellier asked to go back to the old policy voted on last time; go back to the way it was with nothing extra and add it to the contract during negotiations.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to put the check list on hold until Mr. Silva reports findings at 2/8/11 meeting regarding discussion about the check list; motion seconded by Mr. Tellier. Discussion: make sure old way is back in effect by 2/1/11.

In response to a question by Mr. Barham that the item was not on the agenda, Mr. Silva advised that this was matter was previously discussed; this was further discussion about what was voted on and what should be implemented; this is a modest request; School Committee is not taking an affirmative vote; he takes the motion to be to look into this matter and the Committee has the votes to implement this; he and the Superintendent will work it out. Mr. Furtado restated his motion to hold off on the implementation of paperwork until legal counsel reviews and responds. Seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Inclement Weather Policy – Mr. Daft provided an overview of policies (IV.A.1 and IV. A. 2) which need revision to reflect time changes to the start of school. This is not a problem at the secondary level, since students can attend the breakfast program if they arrive at school early. Mr. Daft is reviewing the elementary schedule.

Mr. Tellier received calls regarding days where kids outside when it's zero to twenty degrees and doors are not open at some buildings; most allow students in at 8:45AM but there are a few that do not and he would like to set a specific temperature and the doors open to let

the kids in when it is below that temperature. Mr. Tellier presented a policy revision which specified that elementary school students be allowed into their classroom when the temperature is below 32 degrees. He requested this policy revision be placed on the next agenda. Mr. Tsonos commented about common sense rules; what if there is bad weather and children are not on the breakfast program. Mr. Daft said that elementary schools are open to all for breakfast. Mrs. Rossi asked what if parents do not want their kids at breakfast and it is twelve degrees, can the child go in with the other kids. Mr. Daft said that it poses a problem is parents drop off their children early because there is not adequate supervision; parents should dress the kids appropriately because they may be outside; kids are not allowed off the bus without adult supervision. Mr. Tsonos asked to sharpen and find tune the policy regarding dropping off kids; the time change already set the parents back; this change should be incorporated in the policy. Mr. Tellier asked for the first reading of the amended policy at the next meeting.

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes – A motion was made by Mrs. Abatecola to approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 11, 2011, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0

Requisitions – Bill Lists

Warrant #1058 1/19/11 \$ 1,560.00

Warrant #1059 1/19/11 \$ 88,256.06

Warrant #1060 1/19/11 \$919,702.33

Motion: Mrs. Rossi/Second: Mrs. Abatecola. Discussion: Mrs. Rossi would like the information requested on the Verizon account. Vote 5-0.

Awarding of Bid(s) – Mary King, Finance Director, explained that the Food Service Equipment is more than ten years old and inoperable; with limited funding and lunch mandated, she proposed a 72-month financing plan and asked for approval of the bid contingent on financing. The department will own the equipment after six years and installation will be done by our facilities employees, which will cost \$21,000 from the maintenance budget. Ms. Kind recommended that the bid be awarded to: Trimark United East \$103,705.04 (equipment only- Financing arrangement needed to purchase equipment).

Ms. Rossi – asked if any money in the bond could be used for this. Mary King explained that most of the \$15 million bond is to be used to correct code violations. Delivery and installation of the food service equipment will be during February break and payments will start in March. Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve; seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0.

Security Cameras – Mary King recommended that the bid be awarded

to Dane Tech in the amount of \$39,897 with optional equipment of \$8,206 contingent on final grant approval. Mr. Tellier asked if the equipment is needed; Ms. King advised that the grant is capped at \$45,000. Motion to approve by Mr. Tellier, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0. Dr. Cirillo advised that this is the second year the grant has been received; next one will be used for Martin Middle School.

Public Comment II

Rebecca Ware, parent, expressed her concerns about the weather policy to School Committee members; kids were outside when the temperature was nineteen degrees and she was told this was the prerogative of the principal to have kids standing in line outside in winter weather; she urged the School Committee to support a policy revision proposed by Mr. Tellier. Mr. Tsonos requested that the Superintendent review this policy and procedure to make sure kids are taken care of.

Announcements – Local Advisory Committee Meeting on 1/26/11 (Mr. Furtado)

Riverside Middle School Cheering Squad dinner on 2/10/11; Lyons Fundraiser on March 4th

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Furtado; seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee