

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence, City Hall

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

April 12, 2011

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to Order at 6:30PM. School Committee members present: Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi, Charles Tsonos. Also present: Dr. Mario F. Cirillo, Jr., Superintendent of Schools and Andrew Thomas, Esq.

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

Student Liaison Report – Andrew Butler presented a report on high school activities and events.

Student/Teacher Recognition - Mr. Daft introduced Alan and Herman Winter representing the Riverside Bishop Hickey Knights of Columbus; they presented a check for \$1,000 to the East Providence High School Partners Program.

DECA Quiz Bowl Competition Winners – Mr. Daft presented DECA advisors Pat Dionne and Chrys Caffrey and four students who won

the gold medal for the sixth year in a row in the DECA quiz Bowl Competition. Advisors and students, Ryan Brown, Andrew Butler, Mark Hill and Daniel Isabel, will attend the annual International Career Development Conference in Orlando, Florida. Students were congratulated and presented with certificates.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to change the order of the agenda to move up Item H-3 Field Trip Approval, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0. A motion was made by Mrs. Abatecola to approve a request for the students and advisors to travel to the DECA Conference in Orlando Florida from April 28th to May 4th, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Mrs. Rossi read an email she received recognizing High School students who represented our community at the League of French-Speaking Organizations flag raising ceremony held at the RI Statehouse.

Public Comment I – Motion by Mr. Furtado, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Brittany Rubin, a student at the Met School and intern at Francis School spoke about the benefits of full day Kindergarten for all elementary schools in East Providence.

Reports: Superintendent's Report

Organizational Restructuring Phase I – Tabled to next meeting

School Calendar 2011-2012 – Dr. Cirillo recommended approval

subject to revisions; three full days have been allocated to professional development for teachers and staff members.

Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence – Patti Whalen, HR Manager, presented the following personnel items:

Retirement

Donna Rattigan Teacher Asst. – High School - Effective 10/28/2011

Personal Leave of Absence

Patricia Barlow Principal of Extended School Year Program Waddington School – Summer 2011

Financial Report – Mary King, Finance Director, presented the financial report through March 31st indicating expenditures at 46%; revenues at 33% due to timing issues; she reported that the educational jobs funds could be in jeopardy; however, nothing else of significance to report at this time.

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes – A motion was made by Mrs. Abatecola to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2011 meeting, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0. Minutes of the March 21, 2011 will be presented for approval at the next meeting.

RIPIN Parents as Teachers – A motion was made by Mr. Furtado, seconded by Mr. Tellier to move to Item I-4 RIPIN Parents as Teachers. Mr. Furtado asked to discuss this early development

program and presented Deborah Meiklejohn, State Leader of Parents as Teachers, who explained that East Providence originally served as the pilot program; this parent education and family support program provides home visits, group connections, screenings and connections to community resources; the estimated annual cost is \$700/family, some of which is supported with Title I funds. If federal funding is received as expected, RIPIN might be able to provide a small amount of seed money to get the program started again in East Providence. Dr. Cirillo added that at one time the COZE grant funded this program; he has been working with several organizations regarding a Partnership at Watters School; potential grant money is available to establish the Watters Family Center with several partners, such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club and this program might be well suited for that project. The Superintendent will research the costs before making a recommendation.

Action Items

Personnel Appointments – Patti Whalen presented the personnel items:

APPOINTMENTS

Kathleen Caffrey Master Mentor Evaluator – Part Time

John Gendron Master Mentor Evaluator – Part Time

Teresa Medeiros Master Mentor Evaluator – Part Time

Gregg Amore Democratic Club Advisor

Robert Hanlon Boys' Track Coach – Riverside Middle School

Nicole Poirier Cheerleading Coach-Basketball – Riverside Middle School

Nicole Poirier Cheerleading Coach-Soccer – Riverside Middle School

Motion: Mr. Furtado/Second: Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Requisitions – Bill List

Summary of Requisitions – Bill Lists

Warrant #1080	4/5/11	\$	- 150.00
Warrant #1081	4/5/11	\$	\$ 1,000.00
Warrant #1082	4/8/11	\$	529,498.48
Warrant #1083	4/8/11	\$	1,152,508.37
Warrant #1084	4/8/11	\$	1,871.55
Warrant #1085	4/8/11	\$	842,959.94

Motion: Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0. In reference to the Providence Journal invoices, Mrs. Rossi noted that she will present a formal resolution to the Committee at the next meeting to support legislation to change the requirement that School Committees must advertise meeting agendas in a newspaper of general circulation; these legal ads are very costly.

Home School Request – Dr. Cirillo recommended approval; a motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to approve, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Deficit Reduction Plan – Mr. Tsonos explained that at the last meeting of the City Council a motion was passed concerning formation of a committee to address deficit reduction and the City Council requested that the School Committee join them in this effort. Mr. Furtado stated that Councilman Conley will Chair a Committee comprised of two members from the City Council and two members from the School Committee, along with the Superintendent of Schools, and the Director of Finance; within 40 days the sub-committee will propose a deficit elimination plan which will be sent to the Auditor General for approval. A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to approve moving forward on this effort, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola, Vote 5-0. A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to nominate two School Committee members, Mrs. Rossi and Mr. Tsonos, to serve on that subcommittee, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0. Mr. Tsonos explained that Mr. Conley will provide meeting dates in order for everyone to participate; within 40 days the committee will have some type of resolution which is necessary for everyone's good. Dr. Cirillo said he has a preliminary meeting tomorrow with Mr. Andreoni, Mary King, and bond counsel Mr. Steve Maceroni, before the meetings are held. Mr. Tellier requested an update at School Committee meetings via an agenda item.

Mr. Tsonos asked for clarification of the deficit number, since we are about six months into this year's budget. Mary King stated that the \$6.2 million from the 2009 audit is listed in the financial statements; as far as FY 2010 she does not believe that number can be included

because it is not an audited number. Mr. Tsonos also had a concern about fall-out from litigation and would like to eliminate the problem as soon as possible.

Dr. Cirillo is working on a Phase I and II Reorganization at the next meeting and a Phase III consolidation. Mr. Tsonos said that Mayor Rogers scheduled a joint meeting on May 2, 2011 and in order for the City Council to vote on items, it may take a different format; the School Committee will be in attendance.

Valarie Lawson, EPEA President, asked a question regarding the deficit of \$6.2 million. Mr. Tsonos explained that outstanding litigation cannot be figured in because it is a nebulous figure. Mary King stated that because that issue is not part of the discussion and will be after the financial audit, she does not believe that it can be included in the discussion at this time, but will check on that.

New Business

Language Choices - Janet Sheehan, High School Principal, explained that every one of the languages, Spanish, French and Portuguese at levels 4 and 5 are Early Enrollment Program classes through Rhode Island College and she is hoping to have AP French and Spanish at the high school in the near future if we can fund a language lab for students. Discussion regarding elimination of the French program at the Middle Schools a few years ago.

Robert Faria addressed the Committee regarding the elimination of the French program at the middle schools; he was on the School Committee at that time and both principals spoke about the fact that due to NECAP scores, it was more important to emphasize the work on reading and writing; based on the recommendation at that time, the School Committee voted to discontinue the French program. He also felt that both middle schools should be on board with the same programs. Fran Barry, Guidance Counselor at Martin, said she was against the elimination of the French program at Martin and the Principal at that time also challenged the decision to eliminate the program.

Dr. Cirillo cautioned the School Committee regarding making any decisions on the program now; the Middle Schools are not on similar schedules; he is not opposed to it, but it is not that easy to do right now. He will provide more information in order for the School Committee to make a decision.

Mr. Tsonos questioned if students are being challenged enough at all levels. Dr. Caswell responded that the high school is at a much high level than before; however, K-8 is still not 100% percent as curriculum revisions are presently taking place but require time. Discussion took place regarding curriculum work which requires time and resources. Mr. Tsonos commented that he would like to have further discussion on what can be done at both the elementary and secondary level to further challenge students.

Incident Rates at the High School – Mr. Furtado requested that this item be placed on the agenda in response to inquiries he received about an increase in incidences at the High School. Based on a report given by Principal Janet Sheehan, there were 29 arrests at the school this year, which represents 1.7 percent of the student population of 1623 students and although suspensions are given out for fighting, students may also receive a disorderly conduct or assault charge, depending on the nature of the incident. Ms. Sheehan said that suspensions are not necessarily a deterrent and will not prevent students from fighting; she makes it very clear that fighting will not be tolerated at the high school. Discussion regarding the number of incidences in East Providence as compared to other high schools in the state and follow up for students who have difficulties classified as mental illness issues. One parent spoke about her own son’s experience this year which he described as a combat zone.

Dena Tsonos a teacher at Hennessey spoke about how the Positive Behavior Intervention/Support Program (PBIS) focuses on teaching elementary children how we want them to behave; life has changed over the last ten years and teachers and parents are doing their best to instill respect in children. She felt that children do well if they can and that PBIS is an important program.

Mr. Daft, Assistant Superintendent, disagreed with the portrayal of the high school as a combat zone. Since 2008, a lot has happened such

as social networking; in 2005 East Providence was classified as an urban ring school district, however, it is now starting to be more of an urban school district. Schools need more and more supports; he visits the high school and people remark about how respectful and well mannered the students are. Springtime typically brings more incidents; this is reality for a high school; East Providence has changed is not the same community it once was.

Dr. Cirillo did not agree with the comments that the school is out of control; he asked to refer to the statistics for comparable schools; what we are seeing is a change in philosophy; expulsion is not necessarily the way to go and in-school suspension is only as good as the person covering it.

IV.A.1. School Calendar – Revised Policy (First Passage)

Public Comment II - Cathy Grilo, Hamilton Street, has children at Hennessey School, which promotes home and school working together as a team. She asked Mr. Furtado if he researches every rumor or complaint; she has parents who come up to her and she always checks things out first. Mr. Furtado said he does not jump on every rumor first and then find out the information later. Mrs. Grilo asked that he tour every school and talk to everyone; communication affects all. She also heard that incident reports from every school are being sent to School Committee members and expressed concern that if names were on those reports they should not be given out. Ms.

Grilo asked that everyone work as a group with the community.

Mr. Tsonos suggested that the School Committee will address this concern with legal counsel to make sure no laws are being violated, even though this is included in a School Committee policy. The School Committee considers this to be privileged information, but it is part of their responsibility as elected officials to be aware of incidences in the schools.

IV.A.1 School Calendar –Dr. Cirillo recommended first passage of the revised policy. Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Public Comment - Mr. Ripka thanks to the Superintendent for his cooperation regarding the Rebuilding America Program as it relates to Oldham School; presently only eight people have signed up to work there.

Mrs. Grilo passed on thanks to Hennessey parents regarding rumors about students being moved; she thanked administration for addressing those concerns.

Mrs. Andrade has four children at high school, middle school and elementary levels. Although few parents attend School Committee meetings they do watch what is happening especially if it concerns their own children; some will not speak up because they are afraid of retaliation. Dr. Cirillo has rearranged staff and made changes such as

school repairs, new math and other curriculum changes, technology advancements, and improved NECAP scores at the High School which are just some of the accomplishments parents have been asking for . There have been comments that the administration is too expensive and of teachers being upset about that, but the hard work of this administration has benefited students and parents are grateful for that. Parents are not comfortable that things have started to turn and are taken back as negative; she mentioned that Mr. Barham was let go with no cause with his salary still being paid. She felt that Dr. Cirillo puts students first, is approachable, and meets with parents, which has not always been the case in the past. She said that what is happening now is making parents nervous because when a Superintendent leaves, reforms lose. There is a fear that East Providence is headed in the direction of Providence. So much has happened under this administration that she hoped that the School Committee will work with this administration in a positive direction and evaluate administrators fairly at the end of their contracts.

Mary Texeira, a teacher at Silver Spring, did not want anyone to think that teachers hold it against kids when parents speak up; she taught Mrs. Andrades's children and they did not always agree on everything. She believes that parents should come to meetings; it is not always easy for her to come either, because the School Committee is her boss. She wants parents to attend meetings for the benefit of their children and the school district.

Announcements

Mrs. Abatecola - Volunteers needed for Silver Spring Clean up on April 16th

Mrs. Rossi – Post Prom party on April 29th and Rebuilding Together Project at Oldham and Whiteknact on April 30; volunteers should email or phone her.

Mr. Furtado – Encouraged everyone to volunteer for the Rebuilding America Project at Whiteknact School, which includes corporate sponsors Blue Cross and Gilbane Co.

Mr. Tsonos announced that the School Committee will not meet on 4/26/11. Dr. Cirillo announced that the next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 4th and that a joint meeting with the City Council is being planned for May 2nd. Mr. Tsonos related that it is important to the Committee that everyone always has a chance with this School Committee to have public comment at meetings.

Mr. Furtado announced that the Committee would convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1) Collective Bargaining, and Litigation/Pending Litigation - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2). A motion was made by Mrs. Abatecola to convene in executive session, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

The School Committee returned to Public Session. A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to seal the minutes of the Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Report Executive Session Votes – The School Committee agreed to send a letter as discussed. A motion was made to adjourn by Mrs. Abatecola, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

**Patricia A. Iannelli Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee
Administrative Assistant**