

# **EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

**East Providence School Committee**

**East Providence, City Hall**

**145 Taunton Avenue**

**East Providence, Rhode Island 02914**

**January 24, 2012**

## **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: Edward M. Daft, Interim Superintendent and Andrew Thomas, Esq.**

**The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag & Moment of Silence observed in memory of Eliza Moniz.**

**Mr. Daft reported that the School Department has been meeting twice per week with the City of East Providence Budget Commission discussing School Department issues and bills; the Budget Commission will continue to look for efficiencies within the city and school departments and the Chairman, Mr. O'Keefe, advised that the city will be able to meet payroll until April or May. Mr. Tsonos advised that the Budget Commission meets from 2-4PM on Tuesdays and Thursday and has a great deal of power through city financial oversight which will affect the Superintendent Search. He advised**

that Interim Superintendent, Mr. Edward Daft, will remain in place for an undetermined period of time. Mr. Tsonos commented that Commission meetings are not televised or are people able to attend; this is a slow, deliberative process which will not be finished any time soon.

#### **Public Comment I**

Mr. Tsonos announced that the Orlo Avenue School playground project is ready to begin thanks to the organizer, Nicole Estrella, a parent at the school. Mr. Edward Catelli, Director of Buildings and Grounds, is assisting with the project. Volunteers will also be needed to help with the work.

Ron Centa, a high school athlete, commented that his participation in middle school sports and the support he received from his coaches provided stepping stones to adulthood; he asked that the School Committee not terminate the middle school sports program.

Jonathan Gray, a high school junior, played varsity sports at Martin Middle School and through the wrestling program, he found the motivation that really affected his life; he worked hard for his grades so he would not fail the team; if sports are cut, kids will find things to do which are disruptive to the community.

Andrew Brenner, a high school junior and Wrestling Team member, believed all students could graduate; the problem is a lack of motivation; taking away sports takes away the desire to succeed; the

wrestling team helped him with math; sports leads to better grades; there is a passion for sports and cutting sports is not the right choice.

Nina Tavares, a high school student; chose the wrestling team which has helped her with her sense of belonging and her education; she asked to keep sports alive in East Providence.

June Coan, a coach, stated that sports is an outlet for kids after school and is not a duplicate of community sports programs; cutting it would affect about 300 students; a group is starting to work together to help with funding athletics; there is a petition underway and she read from it; the group is against cutting sports as recommended by the B & E report; community sports cost money; elimination of teams because of low enrollment could have Title 9 issues when cutting teams; she asked to keep sports alive to keep kids active and out of trouble.

Bill McEnery, coached golf for 40 years; he believed the freshman program at the High School is needed because it promotes emotional development and student athletes are held accountable for their actions in the classroom. Outside programs are not available; most freshmen are not ready and need to develop mentally and physically.

Tom Costa, 94 Miller Avenue, a parent and taxpayer in the city supports keeping sports programs; all extracurricular activities are

**an integral part of education; East Providence schools did a good job educating his kids and sports were a big part of that; if changes are made on the backs of the kids, it could become the worst school system**

**Patricia Barlow, a Principal in East Providence for 13 years, spoke in support of full day Kindergarten since there is an abundance of evidence that the educational foundation must be strong; there is a significant difference in children who attend half day K as compared to full day K. East Providence had two schools with half day programs which were recently moved to full day K and although the city is struggling, the educational benefits outweigh the costs. She believed it is worth providing full day K to every child in every school in East Providence.**

**Patrick Conaty supported full day Kindergarten; he grew up in the city, is a product of the athletic program and recently purchased a home in Waddington; he has two sons and has seen the difference between the half and full day K programs with his own children and the students and teachers need the extra time. He also wanted to let the School Committee know that sports were a wonderful program which allowed him to go to college.**

**Mr. Daft recognized Coach Galligan and all the students who attended the meeting to express their opinions about sports programs; the students did a wonderful job and he appreciated them coming to**

speak at the meeting. He explained that the School Committee has not waived and what they feel is consistent with these opinions. Mr. Tsonos noted that School Committee members are in agreement and thanked everyone for being part of the decision making process.

#### **Report: Interim Superintendent's Report**

**Update on High School Senior Portfolios** V Mr. Daft presented a report from Ms. Janet Sheehan, High School Principal, on the completion of Senior Portfolios as follows:

„X As of September 2011, approximately 31% of seniors had completed graduation portfolios and 69% of potential graduates were in various stages toward completion.

„X As of October 2011, after school remediation began with seniors and continues now. January 2012, the senior portfolio completion rate has increased to 71%; Portfolio Camp will take place January 28, 2012 and is open to all students.

„X 185 Senior Projects were presented; 164 were proficient in the oral presentation; another 21 have not yet been completed. Principal, Ms. Sheehan, felt that the numbers were better than last year's and that students were on track.

#### **Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence** V

Mary King, Finance Director, presented the following personnel items:

#### **RETIREMENT**

**Beverly DaSilva (11 years), Teacher Assistant-ORLO- Effective end of**

**11/12 school year**

**Joan Aasen (33 years), Resource Teacher-Silver Spring-Effective- End of 2011/2012 school year**

## **RESIGNATION**

**Kristin Carbone , Math Teacher-MMS-Effective 01/26/2012**

**Leslie Mac Donald, Speech Pathologist-Effective 01/22/2012**

## **FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

**Susana Pimentel, Band Director-MMS-Effective approx. 2/06/2012-04/27/2012**

**Discussion: In response to questions from Mrs. Rossi and Mrs. Abatecola regarding the resignation of a speech pathologist, Mr. Daft advised that he will present the replacement position to the Budget Commission for approval and will make every effort to get the most certified person into the classroom as soon as possible.**

## **Action Items**

**Finance Director, Mary King, advised that five million dollars will be released by the city to pay school department vendors with the goal to stay in 60-day status; she will provide the information to the School Committee regarding the vendors who will be receiving payment. In response to a question from Mr. Tsonos, Mary King advised this will bring the timeframe to December; next month the**

**number will be smaller and we will have everyone in that time frame.**

**Requisitions ;V Bill List**

**Warrant #1178 1/13/12 \$1,287.40**

**Warrant #1179 1/19/12 \$5,107.00**

**Warrant #1180 1/19/12 \$6,335.00**

**Motion by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Tellier for discussion. Mr. Tellier noted that these items will be presented to the Budget Commission for confirmation. All voted aye.**

**Approval of Advertising Request by AYSO 715 - Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve the request, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0**

**Amended Policy II.D.5. Use of School Buildings/School Grounds ;V Motion to approve second passage of the amended policy by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.**

**Vote on B & E Report Recommendations:**

**School Committee Policy Manual Update ;V Motion by Mr. Furtado to go forward with this recommendation and to include the expense in the 2013 budget, seconded by Mrs. Rossi for discussion: the policy book has not been updated for more than 20 years and outside assistance is needed to go through it and make recommendations. Mr. Tsonos asked if that would include an RFP process. Mrs. Rossi stated that now that it is approved, a bid can go out in 2013. Mr.**

**Tellier commented that this has been an ongoing process with the School Committee. Mary King advised that the Budget Commission talked about this at a meeting and would like to get it started this year. The B & E report noted issues such as the absence of policies which are needed and that a revamp of the policy book would be an extensive process which could take up to six months. Mr. Daft added that the Budget Commission also requested RFP's (Requests for Proposals) for this project. Mr. Tsonos noted that during discussions it was noted that the city policies also need updating and that school and city policies should be aligned**

**Vote 5-0.**

**Reduction in All-Day Kindergarten ¶ Mrs. Rossi prepared a PowerPoint presentation. A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to keep full day Kindergarten in place, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Mr. Tellier gave his full support to all day Kindergarten; he stated that the amount of money we would save is small compared to what could be additional special education services in the future. Mr. Furtado was also in favor of full day Kindergarten and solving what was an equity issue with two schools which did not have it; they wanted all kids to have the same start; cutting this program would be in the wrong direction and he would never support that. Mr. Tsonos agreed with all the discussion to keep the full day Kindergarten program. Vote 5-0.**

**Expansion of Pre-School Program ¶ Mrs. Rossi spoke in favor of the expansion, but would like to review a plan before implementation; a motion was made by Mrs. Rossi that the Superintendent keeps the**

**School Committee informed on this project, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Mr. Furtado spoke about the research; Ms. Cheryl Ursillo, Interim Director of Pupil Personnel, stated that she has had ongoing conversations with Ms. Sylvia, the Director of the Meadowcrest Preschool Program. Mr. Furtado added the proposed expansion would generate additional openings for regular preschool children. Mr. Tsonos noted those openings would generate revenue. Vote 5-0.**

**Use of Facilities Fees ¶V A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to follow recommendations in the B & E Report (to revisit and change policy so that revenue from use of facilities covers all department costs; at year end the revenues should exceed the school's costs of providing the usage), seconded by Mrs. Rossi and Mrs. Abatecola. Discussion: Mr. Tsonos asked if the policy voted on tonight aligns with this recommendation. Mr. Tellier stated that currently some organizations are exempted and pay nothing but will now pay year round; there is about \$50,000 in additional fees resulting from this new policy which could increase if the number of requests from organizations increases. Mrs. Rossi explained that the fees are spread across sports groups who appreciated the use of the schools and facilities and provided input and assistance in this process. Mr. Tellier explained that some changes will be effective April 1st in order to give the groups a couple of months to plan for added fees and other groups who will be affected next school year will need to be notified.**

**Mrs. Rossi noted that only two months of the next fiscal year will be affected by this policy fee change as related to additional revenue.**

**All Voted 5-0.**

## **Old Business**

**Superintendent Search Sub-Committee Report - Mr. Tsonos reported that the Budget Commission has discouraged the School Committee from pursuing the Superintendent Search and recommended strongly suspending the search until next January. All financial decisions must be reviewed by the Budget Commission; we have several choices to delay or select an Interim from outside the district; if further decisions from Commission, he will pass it on. Mrs. Rossi stated that Mr. Daft has graciously offered to stay on as long as needed, but there is an immediate need for an assistant to handle curriculum issues and hiring issues; this needs to be expedited as soon as possible, possibly on the next agenda docket.**

**Mr. Daft stated that he appreciated all the hard work of staff members; administration is still a decent place to work, which speaks to the employees there; he agreed to stay on and all are doing their fair share to assist. The School Committee requested that Mr. Daft present information to the School Committee and Budget Commission regarding the assistant position.**

## **Public Comment II**

**Mary Teixeira, a teacher at Silver Spring School, appreciated that Mr. Daft will remain in place as Interim Superintendent; she agreed with the presentation and has emailed the School Committee about support of education; East Providence schools have received as low**

as 51% funding and along with cuts from the federal government, the schools cannot take the hit and keep going; she applauded the City Council for stepping up; at this point it's neglect; the previous School Committee cut teachers' salaries, but things have gotten worse; it is not just about the teachers; there has been a loss of home values; putting education first in the city would help everyone and the city would be able to weather storms; she was disturbed about people not being at meetings; when recess time was cut, 300 people showed up; we need to let the City Council know this is important; her community is worth something; can't use fixed income as a reason; cities struggling; she hoped people will see it and realize that ; now the decision has been taken out of the city's control; where she lives, it's the whole town, but in East Providence, we separate; parents should come forward to insist on doing the right things for kids.

## **Announcements**

Mr. Tsonos announced a fundraiser for Orlo Avenue School Playground on February 4th at the High School. Mr. Daft announced that Kindergarten registration begins daily on February 1st and one evening registration is planned for February 8th from 5-8PM. Mr. Furtado noted an East Providence Post article about a worthwhile program called the Circle of Friends and a meeting will be held on February 25th at Martin Middle School.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado that the School Committee

**convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1); Collective Bargaining R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2); Litigation/Pending Litigation -R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a)(2) seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.**

**Motion was made by Mr. Furtado that the School Committee return to Public Session, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola and to seal the minutes of the executive session. It was reported that no votes were taken in Executive Session.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant**

**Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee**