

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence School Committee

East Providence City Hall - Council Chamber

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

April 14, 2014

Open Session

Mr. Monteiro, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

School Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Clupny, Timothy Conley, Anthony Ferreira, Richard Pimentel, Joel Monteiro. Also present: Kim Mercer, Superintendent of Schools and Julie Motta, Assistant Superintendent.

Motion by Ms. Clupny to convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel – R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1) Legal Services; 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 Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Motion by Ms. Clupny to return to Public Session at 7:58PM and to seal the minutes of the Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Vote 5-0.

Report Executive Session Votes

Ms. Clupny reported that a vote had been taken in Executive Session to award special education legal work including the Bradley Contract to Jon Anderson of Edwards & Wildman and that all remaining legal work will remain with Silva & Associates (current legal); the vote was unanimous.

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

Public Comment

Action Items

Reduction of Split Teams at Middle Schools/Redistricting

Bob Hanlon, Building Representative for Riverside Middle School said he spoke for the majority of teachers that the six teams per middle school should be restored as they were pre Bacon & Edge report.

After the Superintendent met with faculty, there were more questions; teachers felt they were not being given information and that this would go forward anyway. Many of the issues were: kids are moved; concern about number of open seats; current 5th grade beneath number; they felt there would be split teams for years to come based on the fact that the numbers show it; small group of students went to literacy and others dumped where they fit; he asked for more literacy teachers. Mr. Hanlon stated that the Superintendent agreed with the

need to keep intervention numbers small and that the School Committee has to approve or reject this plan, which requires a tremendous amount of trust.

Ms. Rodrigues – Martin Middle School building representative stated that this issue has pitted one school against the other; the teams were reorganized for the good of the city during the financial crisis and citizens did whatever they could to bridge the gap at that time. Martin wants their students back and if enough students go back to Martin, it will work; both schools are working toward a common goal; Martin will do whatever it takes; they support single level teams and listed the advantages; the challenge is not to take care of one school over another; all have to work together to make split teams a thing of the past; students are being sent to Riverside Middle School which doesn't make any sense; just as they were bussed out, they should be brought back; what about a lottery; enough to move a sufficient amount to eliminate split teams; students will be welcomed, included and well educated at Martin.

Frank DeVall, Principal of Martin Middle School, stated that history shows non-entity; this affects both schools; five years ago redistricting was done as a result of the B & E Report or for political reasons; the result is currently five teams at each school; he does not want to have split teams; going forward, should be one grade level vs. one teacher teaching two grade levels; one team needed-one grade level; aligned with common core state standards.

Val Lawson, President of the East Providence Education Association pointed out that the cuts made by the Budget Commission were detrimental; there were numerous concerns about the schedule; the School Committee committed to solving some of these problems which need to be addressed: end issues with split teams; repetition of kids going to the same class twice in the same day; consider class sizes as low as possible; note class size at elementary is at max in the majority of buildings. A five year plan should take into consideration elimination of split teams, class size issue, working with both schools collaboratively with the best interest of students and faculty; consideration by School Committee and City Council regarding funding should be a separate item for a separate day; the Superintendent met with staff at Riverside Middle School and all should be kept in the process; comfortable with the change; successful for all involved.

Ms. Maratto, teacher, said she never intended to make this about one middle school; it is about making sure that the plan with the least disruption allows kids to get what they need; she believes the Superintendent feels the same as well; this is not about pitting one school against another school.

Steve Prew – Principal of RMS – fortunate to be an administrator for eleven years; 8 at MMS and 3 at RMS; both great middle schools; no staff at RMS had discussion about anything to do with one middle

school vs. another; every conversation is about how to better serve kids; concern about what positions would be left in education and supporting our kids; Superintendent came to try to answer those questions to put in the best possible way to serve our kids; not one school against another.

Jessica Beauchaine – has an RMS student who will be affected by this; she has respect for the Superintendent to make the right decision; if all these people are here at this meeting, there must be something going on. It upsets her that her son was not in a class all year and she does not want to see it again next year; no materials were provided; her son “fit in” to a class; she would like to see enrichment; the town can come together to make sure education is fair across the board; 28 students in Grade 8 scares her; she asked if alternatives were considered; we seem to make changes that bite us back; before we do things twice again, try to make the right decision first; she has a K student coming up and believes in the School Committee to the best thing for kids.

Chrissy Rossi, City Council felt that split teams were not good for kids; we can get to no split teams; three City Council members here at the meeting tonight; if matter of money, they are all here to hear about how to fix it in the best interest of children.

Kevin Riley – 6th and 7th Grade Science teacher at RMS was glad everyone agrees that this is for students as it should be; teaming is

good; splitting it is bad; the Middle School philosophy is to have a core group of kids with the same teachers; we do not have it; teachers cannot meet as a group to discuss the students they have, can't plan interdisciplinary units; IEP meetings not working; this has been going on for two years and it is not fair to kids and teachers and not meeting students' needs.

Pam Reall – MMS Teacher – proud of her daughter and staff at the high school and RMS; as a parent, she felt that it is important to have true teaming at MMS and RMS.

Tim Conley noted what another speaker pointed out that Grades 3-4-5-6 cohorts indicates split teams for the future. The Superintendent explained that you can't do it unless scheduling is done first; a team in the city will need to look at configurations for elementary students (next year). Mr. Conley stated that the numbers now show split teams.

Superintendent Mercer stated that we may not know; it's whatever we need to do; that is our goal; split at RMS because parents were given a choice; will work year after year to make sure students get the best education and will try to address split teams.

Mr. Monteiro commented regarding the pitting of one school against another; as a result of individuals telling the community information they were not privy to, it caused immediate animosity to be created; a

perception problem there; intention is to drive point home to get people involved; all should be aware of how we communicate; it filters back to students; slighting one for another is insulting; we need to choose words wisely; he heard consistent information from all concerned; that's only part of the problem; does not stop there; remarks were upsetting; all open and available; call or email School Committee; we need to have good communication.

Superintendent Mercer stated that all legitimate concerns have been documented and we will do best we can for students.

Mr. Ferreira said he had issues with the city and School Department; he sat through those meetings about how we will try something; this should not happen; kids and educators suffering for a while; School Committee should have a plan in front of us that someone will be responsible for; we have closed schools, have moving art and traveling music; at the Budget Commission meetings, no one said if we go that way, we will lose rooms, etc. The Superintendent said this is the road we are going on; no guidance; honest opinion; until this is on paper, he has issues; why now; how many teachers do we need to fix this on Monday morning; or for September, how many teachers do we need; programs being designed around money; every single kid should have the opportunity he or she wants; if a plan is not in writing we are going down the same road; new Superintendent. Goal and then disarray; ask educators to put this in writing; if \$300,000 needed, ask City Council if there is any way to accomplish.

Mr. Monteiro stated that his understanding was that there would be two steps; address scheduling issue in addition to split teams; student mix needs; approval or not will determine where student population goes and making up a schedule. His position is that we need to eliminate split teams; meet with the stakeholders; can't do without scheduling in place; this is a challenge; has to be a commitment to follow through; not about the number of teachers; not right for teachers to have to teach two curriculums; nothing cut and dried about it

Kim Mercer pointed out that it would allow students access to more electives if we eliminate split teams.

Mr. Monteiro stated that we are all in close contact with teachers, union reps, and administrators, working toward an agreeable decision; School Committee needs to make a commitment to the process and then see that the process is followed through.

Mr. Conley felt that this was a difficult vote; he thanked teachers for valuable input; the process disturbing; his family went to Riverside Middle School and his children attend the school now, so he has a vested interest; of the sole reason is eliminating split teams, then sacrificing one school against another is irresponsible; shares Mr. Ferreira's concerns that there are too many uncertainties to be comfortable with this; split teams are not educationally sound and we

have to take steps to change that; if do this, we need a commitment (2015-16) to eliminate split teams in our schools; he thanked the teachers for input.

Discussion:

Mr. Monteiro asked when and why?

Kim Mercer – Martin this year; definitely next year one.

Mr. Ferreira – will not vote year to year; cannot discuss where you live; there has to be a way to fix the problem.

Kim Mercer – after kids back in neighborhood schools; after parental request students are back in neighborhood schools; put everything back way it was

Mr. Monteiro – what is stopping us from committing to this?

Mr. Conley – had a problem with doing it when it doesn't need a plan by such a day for no more split teams at middle schools; should make an assessment on current enrollments and what the trends show

Mr. Ferreira – teachers stressed to the max- he mentioned housing developments coming; Kettle Point, JB Anthony project – three bedroom houses – need to start planning for it

Mr. Monteiro – frustrated with the School Committee; Superintendent said that we what wanted to do- if no split teams in two years, administration has to follow that

Mr. Conley – not doing anything irresponsible; willing to amend discomfort; vague and generalities have not done well for the city; the devil is in the details

Mr. Monteiro – it is the duty of the School Committee to follow the process from here

Mr. Ferreira– too late until September

Kim Mercer – run the schedule to see what needs are first; goal is within a year or two to eliminate all split teams at the middle schools; it might mean that Riverside needs another team; commitment is to eliminate split teams

Ms. Clupny requested to move forward with this item; change is scary and nothing guaranteed; we have to do the best we can and everyone is committed to that; motion to move forward with reduction of split teams at the middle schools; redistrict; elimination of split teams (no longer than two years or sooner), seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Roll call vote: Conley, nay; Ferreira, nay; Clupny, aye; Pimentel, aye; Monteiro, aye. Vote 3-2.

Approval of RFP for Food Service – Kim Mercer, Superintendent requested approval;

Discussion: Mr. Monteiro explained that a guideline to the bidder was to take heavy consideration regarding retaining current employees; this involves approximately 40 employees/residents of East Providence.

Mr. Ferreira said it had not read the 49 pages yet; he asked why letters are sent home with students if a lunch bill is not paid; then

student is given cheese sandwich and fruit; he wants to research this more; we lose a lot of money on this and he wanted to know where did the \$50-70 thousand dollars go? He thought it wrong to go out with an RFP with no accountability; why go out to bid to try to save money without knowing where we are losing it?

Mr. Monteiro explained that being in a collaborative muddies it up; successful to go out as a sole bidder; we have enough professional people to find out where we are losing money. Mr. Conley thought of this as feedback in the marketplace; questions should be answered.

Motion by Mr. Conley to approve RFP, seconded by Ms. Clupny. Roll call vote: Ms. Clupny, aye; Mr. Conley, aye; Mr. Ferreira, nay; Mr. Pimentel, aye, Mr. Monteiro, aye. Vote 4-1.

Revised Policies – First Passage:

IV.D.1. Placement, Promotion, Retention and Grading

Dawn August, Director of Instruction and Intervention noted changes:

Placement – new K dates;

Promotion get 3 secondary schools how many credits in what content areas and RIDE requirements

Retention – more clearly articulates obligation to children interventions, after school mentoring tightens up on line blended 6-12 as appropriate

Grading many processes consistent K-12 equivalent intervals – one

assignment to drag down

Julie Motta, Assistant Superintendent reported that teachers from all different content areas participated on the Team which developed the Best Practices in Grading – Issues, Guidelines, Appendix and Expected Practices – Spring 2014 document.

Mr. Monteiro pointed out something he felt was contradictory about homework; consequences to student's grade; not effected.

Dawn August stated we are working to proficient based grade; behavioral consequences allow retest in a secure setting; highest grade allowed. Julie Motta – separate behavioral.

Dawn August – offering document to further layout processes – Professional Development to make it better (living part of document); can add back 65; need to say same thing

Mr. Monteiro opposes the school district linking test scores to graduate.

Julie Motta – cannot supersede RIDE regulations; we are obligated to list it.

Motion by Ms. Clupny to approve first passage; seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Vote 5-0.

Compulsory Education Policy

Julie Motta explained that the law changed; students cannot drop out at age 16 any longer; we need to put a plan in place to get these

students, ages 16-18, to graduation; the district is obligated to do that.

Motion by Ms. Clupny to approve first passage of the policy, seconded by Mr. Pimentel. Vote 5-0.

Personnel – Recalls

Superintendent Recommended Recall (From Layoff) of the following Personnel:

Amy Souza Physical Education – Elementary

Sara Duarte Physical Education – High School

Kelly Love English – Martin Middle School

Alexandra Robat Art – High School

Keith Anderson Business – High School

Amanda Izzi Social Studies

Paula Freitas Language – Riverside Middle School

Marisa Martinez Music – High School

Amy Rudis Art 4/5 – High School

David Jarvais Tech Ed – Martin Middle School

Motion to approve by Ms. Clupny, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Motion by Ms. Clupny to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Elizabeth Clupny, Clerk of the Committee