

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence School committee

East Providence City Hall – Council Chamber

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

February 10, 2015

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30P.M.

Members present: Jessica Beauchaine, Nathan Cahoon, Anthony Ferreira, Joel Monteiro, Charles Tsonos. Also Present: Kim Mercer, Superintendent of Schools, Robert M. Silva, Esq., Andrew Thomas, Esq.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon that the 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 Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0.

Return to Public Session – Motion by Mr. Cahoon to return to public session and to seal the minutes of the Executive Session, seconded by Ms. Beauchaine. Vote 5-0.

Report Executive Session Votes – No Votes were taken.

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

Facilities Sub Committee Report – Mr. Cahoon reported on the meeting held on February 5, 2015;

- Update on Iron Construction; discussed residual of pending payment' submitted bill for balance of money retained to be discussed at the meeting tonight.**
- Hennessey Roof- Farrar will engage Eagle Roofing when snow clears.**
- Presentation on solar panels from Julian Dash; need to determine if our buildings are candidates for solar panels; would look at revenue source from power generated; little to no cost to district; will come back again with all appropriate information to answer questions.**
- Update on Fire Department reports-various write ups in report; all have been working on making sense of all items; prioritizing fixes and where they fit priority-wise. Will present to Fire Marshall on 3/3/15 with all the fixes and bring information back to the School Committee; probably will be some adjustments to our list and possibly new work for list; bring back at next meeting. Mr. Cahoon has updated the list from last meeting, but no changes have been made yet.**
- Mr. Ferreira adamant about fire doors; if sliding out the schedule, he wants that to be done at a School Committee meeting in Council Chamber. Mr. Cahoon noted that Mr. Ferreira raised issue about the**

doors; doing three doors on the list; discussion about making sure total door project does not slide off too far. Need to pay attention to doors but it depends on what the Fire Marshall tells us.

Student/Staff Recognition – High School DECA Chapter Students attended to make a presentation on their participation in the National DECA Advocacy Campaign promoting February as Career & Technical Month.

Student Liaison Report – William Vanner presented a report on high school activities and events.

Public Comment 1 – Agenda Items

Jessica Beauchaine asked for information from the DECA students as to how they are fundraising. Contact DECA through the advisor, Mrs. Chrystine Caffrey, or forward donations to DECA at EP high school.

Chrissy Rossi, Vice President of Whiteknact PTA; expressed her concern and concerns of parents about over testing and too much concentration on PARCC exams; most links for PARCC go to other websites; nothing from our state to give guidance; taking away from teaching and learning; others not subjected like public schools; RIDE will review data but won't know for a year what the problem is; we continue to change curriculum for kids and they are caught in the

shift; wrong on every level; no accountability on the part of the state; Commissioner Gist will not be here for long, not accountable; other states have pushed back on PARCC; she declares war on Common core; the way we have gone about it; and abysmal state. We need to let the School Committee know we want it changed; she has letters for those who do not want to take the test; this is wrong and we need to fix it; curriculum wrong and the teachers afraid of what evaluations will look like; need a better curriculum for our kids; she will put teachers in touch with Superintendent Mercer to express concerns. Mr. Ferreira noted that anyone can go to podium to speak freely with no concerns about how it affects teacher evaluations.

PTA/PTO Reports

Mrs. Rossi – Whiteknact – Pennies for Patients first week of March; Bingo will be rescheduled to April 17th, Diversity Night on May 15th, Ice Cream Social on March 20th with a Book Fair and Parenting Partners continues; Mural in the library thanks to Mr. Ferreira.

Isilda Teves – Orlo Avenue School – Priority School Meeting on 2/23/15 at 5:30PM; YMCA Learning Program, Soup Kindness movement; PTA tomorrow night; Math – demo for Orlo parents – Parent Workshop, Chorus Performing at Black History Month Program.

Rebecca Warr – Oldham – Thursday at 5:30PM PTA – only school to participate and have winners in a program sponsored by RI PTA –

Reflections Celebration on 2/29/15.

Superintendent's Report

Instructional Technology Update – Kelly Ahrens, Chief Information Officer presented a report and update on the status of technology and to inform the School Committee about the great things happening in our schools. Kelly will be putting together a Five Year Plan with Mr. Luba, Financial Overseer, and will present it to the Superintendent; she has asked vendors to do presentations and will set up dates for that; School Committee will be invited to presentations. Also working on a project with John Carnevale; putting together real numbers for the Superintendent to get appropriate vendors. Also posted a new position as discussed with the Superintendent; we need a go-to-person for the school district for the K-12 environment; must understand school functions and have some type of education background. We now have an on-line content developer; go to the new Facebook page; will be working with School Department to help improve the website.

Mrs. Beauchaine was grateful to receive the information and noted that it is also important for the public to have it; as a new person on the School Committee, should be minimum qualifications K-12 background; discussed this with the Superintendent; need to get the right fit for schools, she asked for an on-line calendar listing everything going on in the school district; Kelly to look into one big master calendar. Mr. Monteiro stated that he met with the on-line

content developer and in order to incorporate the school side, the Superintendent should be involved as the go-to-person for the School Department; need to leverage the website for East Providence and schools are a big part of that; wanted to get that out in the community and to make sure the Superintendent is involved.

Kelly Ahrens advised the Committee that a bucket truck took out the cable at the Career and Technical Center and that she will be working on it tomorrow as a top priority; will talk to Cox about getting a backup line and will keep the Superintendent updated. Kim Mercer advised that the wires were hanging lower than normal due to the weight of the snow; same situation at some other schools. Mr. Ferreira requested a report on the damage to the fiber optic cable. Kelly – Kent Heights had frozen outside wires which affected the Cox internal connection coming into the building.

Mr. Monteiro asked about the 1-1 initiative in other districts.

Kelly explained that we need numbers for the five year plan and they want to do it correctly; all will be more comfortable with that.

Bayside – Soccer/Lacrosse Field Project – Bob Duarte , Mr. Andrade, Mr. Viera, and Eric Boise from Gale Architects attended. Mr. Tsonos asked if the legal department had been made aware of any agreement;

Mr. Silva and Mr. Thomas, School Department legal, will be working with the city going forward.

Mr. Cahoon – need good idea of prospective lease line; question of negotiations regarding entering into a lease; really need to know what

Bayside will get out of it; asking for taxpayers; in room for a good partnership.

Eric Boise, the landscape architect who has been working with Bayside for four months, explained that he did an on-site evaluation and feasibility study, evaluating the potential area on the east side where the tennis courts use to be; artificial turf for soccer and lacrosse fields; he described the project details.

Ms. Beauchaine – since last presentation she has received numerous emails as a School Committee member regarding a connection between the turf and cancer. Mr. Boise explained there was cluster of cancers in Washington State; wanted to know if materials are safe; article admitted they did not do any formal studies; no studies on SBR rubber made from recycled tires; article concerned about causing cancers; number of studies and none found doing fields any different; PA website serves as independent clearing house for many studies; CT department of Health did studies concluding there was no reason not to install these fields; same stuff used in playgrounds; Ms. Beauchaine asked if willing to attend an open forum for parents on Wednesday, 2/18/15 at 7:00PM at the Senior Center.

Graduation Rates – Kim Mercer stated that RI Department released graduation rates for the 2014 (on the RI Department of Education website); high school report and district LEA report includes students who attended out of district placements; pleased to report East

Providence High School graduation rate at 74% to 80% this year; district went from 73% to 77% cited Providence Journal Article which recognized East Providence for significant gains. Administration and teachers should be applauded.

Facilities Update – Kim Mercer stated that maintenance and custodial staff have been busy with snow removal; stated 6:30AM yesterday until 4PM, then came back at 11:00PM until this morning; they should be applauded for good work. Mr. Cahoon said he went to schools on Saturday; sidewalks cleared, salted and sanded; sent pictures to the City Council in order to address some issues. Mr. Monteiro also hopes for discussion with the city; he received emails about some of the streets; requested additional focus on sanding streets; this warrants more proactive re-clearing and sanding; would like that to be common procedure; identify key parts where attention needed.

Ms. Beauchaine – also goes along with the city issues; Riverside Middle School kids do not walk Forbes Street to get to school; they cut through the woods at the Recreation Center; they walk or get a ride; area from the woods to Big Al's parking lot spot got done; Rec Center not done today; that is the path we just got paved; in an emergency evacuation, the kids need to be safe and she asked this to be addressed with someone. Mr. Tsonos – has to be a team effort.

Mr. Ferreira asked if we are on track for doors next week and do we

have the supplies to start the project.

Mr. Cahoon – the Project Manager did say it is on schedule (Charlie Roberts).

Mr. Ferreira asked why the basketball courts at Martin Middle School are being plowed; dump trucks and cars should not be on it; last three storms basketball courts being plowed to park on – why? March 3rd is next Facilities Meeting.

Mr. Ferreira – asked if we are removing snow from school property? Kent Heights, Orlo, and Whiteknact have a lot of cleanup to address; Superintendent has to instruct Facilities Department to clear it; windows non-existent; snow piled up 6-8 feet high; how long do we intend to leave it there against wall, window, and other areas; do we have intention of it staying there melting down, freezing over; have to remove snow from buildings; have to assign two guys; financially it does not make sense not to do it.

School Cancellation Policy – Mr. Tsonos stated that this item was requested by Ms. Beauchaine to be able to have a better understanding of what our procedures are. Kim Mercer noted that the policy is on our website; cancellations depend on the time of day; both she and Assistant Superintendent, Julie Motta receive updates from Facilities Department, obtain feedback and there is a lot of texting back and forth; Facilities Department lets her know about plowing and sanding, etc. Today we called a one hour delay; it is about being safe; doesn't not take that lightly; calls people; all have a role including Julie, Kelly, and others; have received good

information in last two years; have a better idea now.

Mr. Cahoon asked when we will be looking at the end of the school year. Kim Mercer requesting to send a letter for a waiver on one emergency day; already have a meeting tomorrow for the calendar for next year; we did a survey; part will be the next calendar and different options to make up time; she will come back to the School Committee with recommendations; will be discussing at calendar meeting and have recommendations for the March meeting; looking at April vacation or adding to the school day; different options; taking away February vacation is not being considered as an option this year. Group consists of representative from the teachers' union; about 12-15 people involved.

Status of High School lacrosse Uniforms – Mr. Duarte stated that the girls received new uniforms last year and he put an order in last December for the boys, which should be in about the end of March or April 1st at latest.

Personnel Report on Resignation/Leaves of Absence/Retirement

RESIGNATIONS

Kevin Smith – Social Studies Teacher Effective End of 2014-2015 School Year

Margaret Carroll – School Nurse - Effective 1/29/2015 following a 2 year Leave of Absence

Cindy Gregoire – Elementary Teacher – Effective 1/26/2015 following a 2 year Leave of Absence

Emilie Joost – School Nurse – Effective 1/26/2015 following a 2 year Leave of Absence

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Julie Zeng – Music Teacher – Effective 2015-2016 School Year (yr. 2)

Robert Zeng – Music Teacher – Effective 2015-2016 School Year (yr. 2)

Linda Pinheiro Feola – School Nurse – Effective 2015-2016 School Year (yr. 2)

Kristine Ricci – Business Teacher – Effective 2015-2016 School Year (yr. 2)

Anne-Marie Scott – Elementary Teacher – Effective 2015-2016 School Year (yr. 2)

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes of meetings held on 1/21/15 and 1/5/15 (Facilities Sub-Committee Meeting).

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

Action Items

Personnel Appointments – None

Layoffs Effective End of 2014-2015 School Year

Keith Daniels – Pre-Engineering Teacher – Career Technical School

Jennifer cook – Special Education Teacher – Martin Middle School
Edward DeArruda III – Music Teacher – High School
Kelly Giorgi – Kindergarten Teacher – Orlo Avenue School
Brian Kelly – Social Worker – Hennessey & Alternative Learning Program

Motion to approve by Mr. Cahoon, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Roll Call vote: Ms. Beauchaine, nay; Mr. Cahoon, aye; Mr. Ferreira, aye; Mr. Monteiro, aye; Mr. Tsonos, aye. Vote 4-1

Kim Mercer requesting Reduction of School Year from Council of Elementary and Secondary Education for only one day, 1/27/15 emergency reduction of school year. Mr. Monteiro asked why not ask for two days; it was a risk for students and employees under those terms; the worse they can say is no.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to send a request for a two day adjustment, seconded by Mr. Ferreria. Vote 5-0.

Request Line Item Transfers to Purchase new Facilities Equipment/Vehicles – Kim Mercer requested a transfer to Account #57301-Vehicles from Account #58206 (Claims and Settlements) for the purchase of three vehicles to replace old ones in need of replacement. Superintendent stated that purchasing new vehicles was the best option. Mr. Ferreira requested that the vehicles be labeled on side doors and tail gate; there should be a monthly maintenance check for these vehicles; he is not going to spend

\$150,000 without a maintenance program; someone has to be held liable. Motion by Mr. Monteiro, seconded by Mrs. Ferreira. Vote 5-0

Letter of concern from the School committee to State Senators, Representatives and Council Members regarding assessments – Mr. Cahoon explained there was a discussion regarding assessments at the last meeting regarding what types have been done and feedback was received on concerns; requesting to send a letter to the City Council and State Representatives regarding the concerns heard at the last meeting; requested that the School Committee sign off on this letter as a School Committee; it will be sent out to the General Assembly and RIDE, if appropriate. Couple of changes needed; Mr. Cahoon read from third paragraph to the end of the letter; he would like to make some changes; he did not give the Superintendent or the rest of the School Committee an opportunity to review it; a motion was made by Mr. Cahoon to table to next meeting; he would propose an updated draft for School Committee comments for all involved; seconded by Mr. Ferreira; would like legal to review it. Vote 5-0.

Mr. Monteiro had a meeting on assessments; it was eye opening and confusing at the same time; all left with questions; still struggling with true value to students; some mandated, to voluntary, to district; he made a motion that no further assessments be scheduled for this school year unless presented to the School Committee first for benefits, payoffs, etc. School Committee needs an opportunity to approve anything not mandated (not curriculum assessments).

Kim Mercer mentioned DIBELS, classroom assessments by teachers, etc. are they included? Mr. Monteiro – speaking of assessments out of classroom (testing on curriculum); define if not impacting the report card; does not want to see anything else put in the system.

Kim Mercer – assessments measure different things; there are different purposes for different assessments.

Mr. Monteiro – come to the school – why needed; if value, need to explain; told 8 or 9 assessments; not learning anything new; not for our own instruction; value and need for baseline but 8-9 times out of 180 days; need to assess instruction – how many days?

Kim Mercer – will disagree with that.

Mr. Cahoon – talking about assessments downward directed (not classroom assessments).

Ms. Beauchaine – when parents received NECAP science results (why did poorly) held back for so long; she had letter which said to go back to the science teachers; straight A students scored partly proficient or below; would share with rest of School Committee, RIDE letter of concern (graded on curve); NECAP

not based on Common Core; how much money per student do we receive to take this test; we may lose money from federal government; she did not know how much; if we do not participate 95% - we lose money.

Kim Mercer – will put schools in sanctions; lose federal funds if we do not do it.

**Ms. Beauchaine – federal law requires it; cannot afford to lose money
Julie Motta – added that it is \$5 million dollars.**

Ms. Beauchaine – do not know how much behind NECAP tests, asked teachers if data helps or if will actually count for something this year. Ms. Beauchaine seconded the motion made by Mr. Monteiro.

Mr. Tsonos – personally would prefer Mr. Cahoon proceed with the letter, but can we vote on an item if it is not on the agenda?

Mr. Silva – this creates a problem; public not notified about this topic and out of an abundance of caution, Mr. Cahoon should table the question for the next meeting to take the next step until you understand it; School Committee is getting ahead of itself; overall questions; this will not stand up to muster.

Mr. Monteiro stated that his motion has nothing to do with that letter; his action on local assessments; he redacted his motion and will turn it into a request for you to formulate a policy to be on the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Silva – get on agenda for next meeting.

Mr. Monteiro wants a commitment from administration that nothing is to be implemented before next meeting; School committee asked Kim mercer if any coming up.

Mr. Silva – mandate and action item not on the agenda.

Kim Mercer – all types of assessments; (Julie Motta – already scheduled)

Mr. Monteiro – withdrew his motion – put on agenda for next month; his goal not to say if the assessment is bad; slew of assessments and cannot evaluate benefits to students; anything put in place; look at prior to rather than after. Mr. Tsonos – just because doing it for 40-50 years does not mean it should continue.

Requisition – Bill List

Warrant #

1468 1/16/15 \$ 75,293.47

1469 1/26/15 \$ 778,045.94

1470 2/5/15 \$1,285,381.83

1471 2/5/15 \$ 94,111.73

Mr. Ferreira – requested that Automatic Heating items be put in the packet separately; he will meet with Linda Dykeman separately; these repairs are Band-Aids and we need to know where the money is going; depends on what it is going for; at high school about a week and a half ago, classroom below 63 degrees; computer lab; no thermostat 52 degrees in the morning; these are issues we have to address; this is the third winter, will this School committee do something about it; against federal regulations for students to be in a room below 60 degrees; there are issues at the high school; he has solutions on how to fix them; may require not using those classrooms; he cannot hear that we are working on it; this is 14 years old; serious problem with heating system; need boiler guy eight hours day; boiler down; not being blown down, etc.

Mr. Ferreira had another request; he needs to see problems in black and white; no boiler man; millions of dollars; boilers get destroyed by neglect (like the pool-picture of pool, need to test water etc.)

Mr. Ferreira wants to look at purchasing equipment to take care of water damage; should have professional cleaning equipment like a dehumidifier, shop vacuum etc. to put in these rooms; \$22-23,000 dollars; who is paying; we could have same equipment like ServePro; wants to still address that money and get more than one use out of it.

Mr. Monteiro asked if it would be possible for Mr. Barilla to get the state of the boiler from out HVAC man and what he would like to see implemented; he has been an asset to the district; now that he has his hands around it; bring us up to speed about the heating system.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to approve the warrants, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Schedule of Requested Payments with Bond Funds

• SMMA Inv # 0040902 \$1,000.01 Whiteknact Roof

Inv # 0040986 \$4,619.21 Whiteknact Roof

Inv # 0041208 \$2,235.34 Whiteknact Roof

Inv # 0041411 \$1,834.72 Whiteknact Roof

Inv # 0041517 \$ 916.53 Whiteknact Roof

Contract amount: \$18,000.00

Balance remaining after payment \$ 0.00

- **SMMA Inv # 0042010 \$3,540.70* Orlo ES FA Upgrade**

Contract amount: \$6,000.00

Balance remaining after payment \$ 0.00

***includes consulting fee and reimbursable**

- **SMMA Inv # 0042009 \$1,223.03 Egress Door Repair**

Contract amount: \$24,000.00

Balance remaining after payment \$ 0.00

- **SMMA Inv #0042011 \$5,029.97 Accessibility Upgrades**

Contract amount: \$25,000.00

Balance remaining after payment \$ 0.00

- **Iron Construction Requisition #9 \$54,124.24 Life Safety Improvements**

Contract amount: \$5,364,969.41

Balance remaining after payment \$ 0.00

Lindy Dykeman, Deputy Finance Director presented invoices (SMMA and Irons) to be paid with bond funds. Mr. Cahoon – we discussed each bill at Facilities Sub-Committee meeting and there was a consensus to approve.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to approve; discussion by Mr. Ferreira – can we put in a request for Irons re: schedule for auditorium (may not get done during February vacation; we are looking for a timeline; panels are not his responsibility – when is he starting and what is the completion date.

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

Old Business

Discussion regarding School Committee Meetings –

Ms. Beauchaine – construction and school days – need to stay in loop and have two meetings.

Mr. Ferreira – all have different issues to focus on; previous did not go look and bring a lot back to table; each is 4-5 hour meetings; would go along with two meetings for a couple of hours; new projects starting; discussion in School Committee meetings; he will have his own Facilities update.

Mr. Cahoon – we go month to month, if enough for agenda.

Mr. Monteiro – disagreed; previous School Committee spent plenty of month, never requests for meeting turned down; if looking at meetings posted but not held; it confuses the public. Never was the second meeting not held.

Ms. Beauchaine – can do on a month to month basis; Superintendent having a meeting tomorrow; we need to meet; door project meeting at the end of February; there are important issues now to get out.

Mr. Tsonos – we advertise meetings on SOS website; schedule two weeks from now; there is so much going on; schedule a meeting for February 24, 2015. Motion by Ms. Beauchaine for a meeting to be held on February 24, 2015, seconded by Mr. Ferreira. Vote 5-0.

Mr. Ferreira – one example would be snow removal; one month from now; can we all get information; made requests, nothing done; five School Committee instructing Superintendent to inform Peter Barilla; she has two weeks to come up with a report on why rooms have heating problems? He would like to get information in packet or email.

Mr. Tsonos – Facilities Director position closed today.

Mr. Ferreira – still waiting for painter and carpenter positions to be filled.

Public Comment II – Non Agenda Items

Izilda Teves, Orlo Avenue School – Skyward update as an agenda item; elementary schools cannot access it; this was brought up on December 9th by Mr. Monteiro. Also asked about the walk through for the science lab; concern about snow removal at Orlo and kids walking in streets; needs to be cleaned up.

Wellness Committee – Ms. Beauchaine does not agree with the policy in place now; put on next agenda.

Mr. Monteiro – regarding snow removal, we need to identify critical areas in the fall and mark them; get information from the Superintendent; City Council working to get appointment with Mr. Coutu, Superintendent and Facilities Director to get this addressed.

Mr. Ferreira – ask superintendent to give Mr. Coutu and Mr. Lemont the list of streets – our guys san and salt; this situation cannot go day to day with no answer, this is how we can solve it tomorrow.

Mr. Monteiro – cannot have school guy plow and sand on city streets; get City Manager to make part of protocol; get practice on paper; needs to become part of the deal.

Ms. Beauchaine – can't plow with cars there; roads should be

prioritized; talk to the city; she would love to be in on discussion about that.

Mr. Tsonos – city know where the schools are; if they need a map, we have huge problems. This is a team effort and all should be working together; Kim Mercer and the department extend themselves to the city during storms that are extremely bad; we need and want city help.

Speaker – Hennessey sidewalks not done; kids walking in street; not School Committee's jurisdiction, but....SC members passed it on. Mr. Monteiro does not want to make assumptions – let's get it on paper.

Izilda Teves – soccer issue about rubber; not a concern about Orlo. Ms. Beauchaine researched it; the issue is that some playgrounds use that type of artificial turf.

Chrissy Rossi – asked why Collective Bargaining Agreements not on website. Kim Mercer will ask about it. Also Mrs. Rossi asked about moving money to purchase equipment; how long is the Race to the Top.

Kim Mercer responded through June 30th.

Mrs. Rossi – grading system in Grade 1-4; East Providence grading system; asked for a Policy Book copy. Spoke about an employee issue at Whiteknact (referred to the Superintendent).

Announcements

Ms. Beauchaine – students spoke about CTC-February 11th open house 5:00-6:30 PM; all should go; vast majority of programs. Congrats to MMS wrestling team and Boys Swim Team at next meeting.

Izilda Teves – High School Dance Team holding a fundraiser at Applebee's.

Mr. Ferreira thanked the snow crews, schools and city; try to get 95%.

Motion by Mr. Cahoon to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Monteiro. Vote 5-0

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Nathan Cahoon, Clerk of the Committee