

MINUTES

Providence School Department
797 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
February 24, 2014

CONVENE MEETING

1. Call to Order – Keith Oliveira called the meeting to order at 6:37PM

Board Members Present: Keith Oliveira, Nicholas Hemond, Nina Pande, Barbara Wong, Yamil Baez, Robert Gondola

2. Superintendent's Comments –

- Good evening and thank you all for coming. We are here this evening recognizing individuals from Hope High School who have distinguished themselves in football, soccer and cross country competitions. For each of the students we have a Citation from Mayor Taveras and also, one from myself and the School Board that will be presented by Board President Oliveira on behalf of the Board. First I would like to call Mt. Pleasant High School Athletic Director Paul Rao and Hope's Athletic Director Bizmark Maria Gonzalez to the front to help us recognize their athletes along with their Principals, Tamara Sterling from Hope and Acting Principal Chris Coleman from Mt. Pleasant. I would also like to call forward if he's here outgoing Principal Scott Sutherland from Hope who tonight is being recommended tonight for a lead position here on our Central Administration Team. So let us start with the individuals from Hope. These young men and women have distinguished themselves in their chosen sports and have competed and been recognized at the highest level of State wide competition. Superintendent Lusi calls the names of the students who are being honored. Now I would like to introduce to you the Mt. Pleasant High School football team. Their Athletic Director Paul Rao is also their Head Coach and their Assistant Coaches are Bryan Andrews and Brandon Parillo along with Volunteer Coach Richard Parillo and Volunteer Coach Brandon Parillo along with Anthony Rao who is also guide and mentor of this team. These young men had a tremendous season, they went 9-0 in their league 10-1 overall. They had 4 young men named to the All State Teams an outstanding honor for a Division III Team and they won their division pre-super bowl for the State Title, their 4th

consecutive title after winning 3 titles in Division IV and moving up this year. Superintendent Lusi calls the students who are being honored.

- I want to highlight two additional events in addition for the Board and the public. The first is that last week we had a very successful press conference for the announcement of a \$3 million dollar grant to strengthen family engagement in the Providence Schools. This is an I-3 Grant that was received by Ready to Learn Providence and the Providence Schools and it provides for training and something called mind of a making which is about creating strategies as well as teaching parenting strategies that cover every child needs and empowering families to do that. The first point of contact is at our Student Registration Center where the Ready to Learn Staff will reach out to parents at that point and try to encourage them to participate in this training, so we are pleased to be partnering with Ready to Learn in that initiative. Finally, I want to talk a little bit about transportation. The Providence Student Unions Walk in our Shoes event which was early this morning, 6:30 AM to be exact brought increased attention to the important issue of transportation for all of our students in the city. We always read that a 3 mile walk radius for students is burdensome in the best of conditions and yet we ask our students to walk these distances in all weather. The Providence School Board has been clear that it wants to change this policy and I agree. This said, all parties need to recognize that this is a multi faceted problem that does not have simple solutions. As a district, we need to do more and the cost increase for additional bus passes if we move from a 3 mile radius to a 2 mile radius is approximately an additional \$1.5 million dollars. In addition RIPTA should consider discounting passes for students as is done in many cities around the nation. Our state should also provide funding for transportation even through the state aid formula or through some kind of a reimbursement program. So there are multiple players we need to work together to solve this issue but these steps alone will not solve our transportation needs, RIPTA must be able to transport the students who receive the new passes and currently RIPTA states that it does not have the bus equipment necessary to bus the additional students who would receive these passes. It estimates that an additional 7 to 8 busses would be needed if the district is willing to implement a 3 tier bell time system. If we remain in a 2 tier system this bus count could be substantially more, perhaps as many as 20 additional busses. Furthermore, it takes approximately 18 months for RIPTA busses to be delivered once ordered. Securing funding a timely delivery of these busses needs to be a priority on multiple levels if this increase in student riders. We are committed to continuing to work with RIPTA and with our city and state representatives to find solutions

for our students and also actively search for alternative solutions that could help get them to school. Thank you.

APPROVE AGENDA

3. Approve Agenda

The School Board may vote to approve any revision, adoption, and/or ordering of the Agenda. The Superintendent may withdraw, note changes or amendments to agenda items at this time.

MSV – Wong, Baez (6-0) MOTION APPROVED

PUBLIC COMMENT

4. Right to be Heard – Began at 6:55 PM and ended at 7:01 PM

- **Joanne Micheletti** – Good evening Members of the School Board and Superintendent Lusi. First I have to apologize because I'm not as prepared as I like to be but it came to us late on Friday evening that there was going to be a hiring of 100 teachers and bus monitors this evening and our concern is this, we have roughly 22,000 students in the Providence School Department and we have 200 full-time clerks employed right now. On a daily basis school principals and guidance counselors are begging us for more help and we are severely understaffed. You have to understand that since 2009 we have hired 7 clerks to assist in the schools, so the ratio of students to secretaries as you can see is quite a large gap so I am asking the School Board if there is any way that they can help. We have 22 clear budgeted vacancies that have gone out to bid for over 6 years and the school department has not hired. We have begged them repeatedly to please hire for these positions because we need them, even with the 22 positions we still are not staffed properly. We don't have enough subs and schools go uncovered on a regular basis. We have principals who call and say please get another secretary in this building. I'm here really just to ask you if you could assist to help us staff our schools properly because now you have to understand something, every year we are asked to do more and more. Now we are asked to buzz people into the building, we are asked to check every ID of every single person coming into the building aside from trying to take care of parents at the counter, students and assist our principals, assistant principals and guidance counselors and it's just an impossible task. I'm here this evening to say that I know we have budgetary constraints but if we can afford to put on another 100 or close to 100 TA's and Bus Monitors there has got to be something that can be done to at least fill the 22 clear budgeted I can't repeat that enough. I don't know what the money is being used for and it's going

somewhere else but those are budgeted positions that clearly go out for bid, those are vacancies that we should be hiring for. We can't even get subs to come into the building because they make \$10.25 hr., they get no benefits, they have to sub for 2, 3 and 4 years and they receive nothing unlike the other unions who sub for 60 or 90 days consecutively and they receive benefits and a higher pay scale. So what happens is, we get qualified people to come in and they don't stay they go elsewhere. So I'm saying to the School Board, we don't know what else to do and we are not asking for something that is just going to benefit my union this is to benefit the school department. This is to make sure your kids are safe this is to make sure that we are staffed so that we don't have people at the counter and then a walkie-talkie goes off in an emergency and we can't get to it because we are helping other people. Forget the fact that we are under staffed just at least help us and assist us in getting these clear budgeted vacancies filled or allow us to put on more subs because we can't even get permission to hire subs. Thank you very much.

- **Kristen Vita** – Good evening Members of the Board and Superintendent Lusi. I am actually speaking tonight on the same thing Joanne did. I work at Hope High School and I am the Secretary to the Principal and I have been there for 14 years. Hope High School is in dire need of more support. Right now there is myself, I have 3 Assistant Principals secretaries and a guidance clerk and it's one big office and it's a split position so she splits between main office and guidance. Right now my desk is located in the main office so she sits next to me and there are times that her daily duties require her to take care of guidance responsibilities and unfortunately, I have to pick up the slack and deal with the main office which creates a domino effect because I am not able to assist my principal in the capacity I should be assisting her. Hope High School has approximately 1,000 students and there are 150 people on staff there and again to reiterate what Joann said all the phones ring, the door buzzer is going off, there are parents at the counter and the walkie-talkies at times is crazy and my biggest concern is that parent at the counter because I'm a parent. I don't want that person to stand there and say she's ignoring me she's not helping me. Same with the phone, I don't know who is on the other line or if it's an emergency. I always try to put myself in their position. I'm afraid that one day the walkie-talkie will go off in an emergency and I will not be able to respond to it because I am assisting someone else. If we had another main office clerk that would be such an asset to our building. This is all I have to say and I appreciate your consideration in that matter. Thank you.

SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

5. School Board Comments

- **Keith Oliveira** – I would like to start off by congratulating our student athletes. It is always an honor and a pleasure to recognize the accomplishments of our student athletes and we have some real accomplishments that came before us tonight and I want to say that I am very proud of them. On the transportation issue, we the Board are very sympathetic and empathetic to our students when it comes to this 3 mile policy. It is within our responsibility to try to change it and address it. The problem is very complicated and not as simple to change as I am coming to understand but we will work through those complications and I'm quite sure that as a Board that we can come to some type of resolution to accommodate more students than are currently accommodated. The capacity of RIPTA is something that RIPTA and that state officials have to address but is within our responsibility to at least change our policies conducive to needs of our kids. To the clerks that came before us this evening, this is one of those examples of why it's beneficial to have worked in the school, I work in a high school with 250 kids and I see the volume of activity that goes on our main office so I can certainly understand the volume of activity that goes on in some of our largest high schools. We will look into this situation and we will inquire with the Superintendent as to what the current situation is and if there is something that we can do to resolve this we will certainly make every effort to do so. This concludes my comments.
- **Nina Pande** – I know that we'll talk about this when we get to item #7 which is Personnel Actions but just in response to the Public Comments, my understanding of the hires that are down for tonight are people who are already working in the district and in fact are not new hires. These are employees who are on probationary status and we are just re-establishing their status within the district but it's not an additional 100 positions because if it were, I would not be prepared to vote on that. These are positions that have been filled since before the beginning of the school year and that we're slated in the budget as part of the budget so from a finance point of view this did not go to the Finance Committee and the reason why it didn't because this was not created to show a line item in our budget. They are existing positions for people who are appointed at the beginning of the school year and it's reaffirming their position because they were on probationary status and this is more of a ceremonial thing than an actual new hiring of a batch of people. So I just wanted to make sure before we get to it just in case the people here although, I do appreciate all the work that gets done at the schools and I know that everybody is stretched to the max but I

don't want the perception to be these are 100 new hires because they are not and if you look at the effective date most of them are back to August of 2013 and these are people who are waiting for confirmation.

CONSENT AGENDA

Recommendation: The Superintendent recommends School Board approval of Consent agenda items.

6. Minutes – 2-10-14

7. Personnel Actions

A Motion was made to amend item #7 to reflect the addition of Anthony Voccio to the Personnel Actions who was on the list of non-renewals

MSV – Wong, Gondola (5-0) MOTION APPROVED

A Motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda after the addition was made to the Personnel Actions

MSV – Pande, Baez (5-0) MOTION APPROVED

Mr. Hemond stepped out of the room at 7:05 PM and returned at 7:10 PM so he did not vote on the Consent Agenda

REPORT ON PERSONNEL

8. Executive Director of School Transformation – Rachel Mellion – Effective: 2/25/14;
Salary: \$124,542.05

MSV – Gondola, Wong (6-0) MOTION APPROVED

9. Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Learning – Scott Sutherland – Effective: 2/25/14; Salary: \$121,273.02

MSV – Pande, Wong (6-0) MOTION APPROVED

POLICY & PLANNING

10. Employment First – 2nd Read & Adoption

MSV – Pande, Hemond (6-0) MOTION APPROVED

PRESENTATIONS

11. Report on the work of Mass Insight in the District

RETIREMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

12. Retirements & Resignations

7:37 PM – A Motion was made to go into Executive Session

MSV –Hemond, Baez (6-0) MOTION APPROVED

Roll Call: Wong Aye, Baez Aye, Hemond Aye, Oliveira Aye, Gondola (not in the room at the time) Pande Aye

EXECUTIVE SESSION

13. Executive Session Pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1) to discuss the job performance, character or physical/mental health of certain teachers recommended as non-renewals;

REPORT ON EXECUTIVE SESSION VOTES

14. Report on Executive Session Votes

- **There was one vote taken to Uphold the Superintendent’s recommendation pertaining to the non-renewals**

MSV – Hemond, Pande (6-0) UNANIMOUS DECISION

A Motion was made to seal the minutes

MSV – Pande, Hemond (6-0) UNANIMOUS DECISION

A Motion was made to Adjourn the meeting

MSV – Wong, Gondola (6-0) UNANIMOUS DECISION

ADJOURN

15. Adjourn Meeting – The meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM