



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
December 20, 2022

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair DiCenso welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. She declared a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 5:35p.m.

Present: Michael Almeida, Mary Barden, **Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, *Charles Curci
Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, **Joe Eva Gaines

Absent: Marta Martinez

(*Ex-officio, non-voting member)

(** Jo Eva Gaines arrived at 5:43, Amy Beretta arrived at 5:46, Charles Curci arrived at 5:56)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the December 20, 2022, meeting

Chair DiCenso asked for a motion to amend the agenda to adjust the order of Discussion items

On a motion made by Karen Davis and seconded by Colleen Callahan

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the motion to amend the agenda to adjust the order of discussion items.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

On a motion made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda as amended

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion duly made by Michael Almeida and seconded by Karen Davis, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary approve the minutes of the November 15, 2022, meeting

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

(Members Barden and Martinez recused themselves as they did not attend the November 15 meeting)

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green welcomed everyone and opened her report by thanking Rhode Island students, families, educators, and administrators for their hard work and wished everyone a safe and happy holiday season. She announced that RIDE recently released school accountability and improvement results, which was the first release of Rhode Island's Star Rating system post-pandemic.

The Star Rating system details school performance data under Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA). She explained that the Star Rating classifies schools from 1 to 5 stars to provide families and school communities a transparent, accessible, and easy-to-understand snapshot of school performance that can be accessed on RIDE's report card website. Commissioner Infante-Green highlighted several Rhode Island schools that showed significant growth in accountability measures, despite the state and nation being under the most challenging of circumstances. These schools include Bernon Heights Elementary School in Woonsocket, Fogarty Memorial School in Glocester, Matunuck Elementary School in South Kingstown, Robert L. Bailey Elementary School in Providence and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf. She added that this data will help schools evaluate their progress, shift, and expand support as necessary, and deliver the education our students deserve.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green reported that RIDE had announced grants totaling \$250,000 to support the implementation of the Blueprint for MLL success. She noted that the program, which is funded through ESSER III prioritizes high-quality instruction and family engagement to improve student achievement adding that RIDE anticipates awarding up to 20 grants with award sizes ranging from approximately \$10,000 to \$50,000.

Commissioner Infante-Green also announced that RIDE has secured a four-year, \$3.8 million dollar grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA, to increase student access to evidence-based, culturally responsive, and sustaining trauma support services and mental health care in our schools.

Commissioner Infante-Green continued her report speaking on outdoor classroom initiatives and discussed how RIDE launched a \$7.5 Million Learning Inside Out Outdoor Classroom Initiative. She added that through this grant program, up to 70 projects will be awarded up to \$100,000 to create, enhance, and support access to natural resources for all students, while promoting environmental literacy and community connection. Commissioner Infante-Green also noted that professional development for educators will also be available. She thanked the Community School in Cumberland for hosting the launch event and giving guests a tour of their enriching Schoolyard Habitat.

Lastly, she provided a virtual learning update stating that 26 LEAs have submitted their plans for virtual instructional days in the event of inclement weather or another emergency. She added that she has approved 20 of these plans under delegated authority given by the Council. The remaining plans are currently under review and may be recommended for approval under delegated authority if a Declaration of Disaster Emergency remains in effect in the state. Commissioner, turned the meeting over to Chair DiCenso

4. OPEN FORUM

Twenty-four individuals addressed the Council, and 5 individuals submitted a written comment.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Charter New Seats

Chair DiCenso turned the meeting over to Deputy Commissioner Lisa Odom-Villella, who informed the council and all individuals in attendance that the team would be providing information regarding Charter New Seats and Charter Renewals, voting would take place at the January Council meeting. Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella turned the meeting to RIDE's State Strategy & Student Opportunity Officer, Stephen Osborn, Director of School Opportunities, Andrew MacMannis, and Charter School Coordinator, Jermaine Curtis. Mr. Osborn began by giving a brief overview on Charter Schools and provided an update regarding Charter school admissions, funding, and facilities. Mr. Osborn explained that Rhode Island General Law had established a cap of 35 charters and that the state currently has 25 charter schools. He added that RIDE holds high expectations for new charters and those standards have led to increased parent demand. Mr. Osborn added that RIDE has built strong partnerships and continues to work with traditional school districts. This helps support the district-charter collaboration and charter support initiatives. Mr. Osborn acknowledged and reminded the council members of the requirements that require their consideration and the process of requests for proposals for new student seats. Mr. Osborn turned the meeting over to Mr. MacMannis. Mr. MacMannis discussed the public hearing and public comment process adding that RIDE also conducts a local impact analysis that aims to project the financial cost of new and/or expanding charter schools on traditional school districts. Mr. Osborn announced that RIDE's recommendation is that the Council move to approve RISE Prep Mayoral Academy's proposal for an expansion to begin in the school year 2024-2025 in Woonsocket and Burrillville. RIDE is also recommending that the Council moves to approve Segue Institute for Learning's Legacy High School proposal for an expansion to begin in school year 2024-2025 in Central Falls, Providence, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket. Discussion, including questions and concerns from council members, was raised, and addressed by the RIDE team.

b. Charter Renewals

Mr. Osborn began by addressing the overview and connection with statute, Rhode Island Law designates the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (the Council) as the authorizer for charter schools. He explained the renewal process which was completed in partnership with other offices across RIDE. RIDE also partnered with SchoolWorks in the development of charter school renewal reports. Mr. Osborn noted that this renewal cohort is the largest RIDE has ever managed and represents 44% of Rhode Island's charters. He addressed the impact of COVID-19 on school performance and discussed the development of RIDE's recommendations.

The Charter schools that are being recommended for renewals include Achievement First, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, and Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Beacon Charter School, Paul Cuffee Schools, Trinity Academy for Performing Arts, Charette Charter School, Highlander Charter School, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, and Village Green Virtual Charter School.

c. Necessity of School Construction Approvals

Mario Carreno, RIDE's Chief of Operations addressed four districts that will be undergoing school construction pending Council approval totaling \$331,965,251. The four districts include Central Falls, East Providence, Gloucester, and Westerly.

d. Menu for Success

Mario Carreno discussed a new program called Menu for Success which is a cross disciplinary entrepreneurship program or the "food truck program." He discussed the educational opportunities that the program will provide in accounting, automotive, culinary, entrepreneurship, and graphic design. The program will also provide benefits and opportunities that include internship, job opportunities, fundraising and community service from multiple sectors. Participants in the Menu for Success Program include Central Falls, Chariho, Coventry, Cranston, Davies, East Providence, Lincoln, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, Westerly, and Woonsocket. All selected LEAs have approved culinary programs or are members of the MBE Incubator Program.

e. School Accountability

Scott Gausland, Director of Data & Technology Services and Kristen Danusis, Director of the office of School & District Improvement discussed how accountability results and the school improvement process are combined. Mr. Gausland explained that school and district leaders were given the opportunity to meet with RIDE prior to the public release of the 2022 report cards. He provided an update on changes to the accountability system to account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and discussed the components of Rhode Island's accountability system. Mr. Gausland provided an overview of the measures used to evaluate school performance and what the school star rating means. Mr. Gausland provided information on the 2022 star rating based on number of schools by grade span and the percentage of schools by grade span including a comparison of the 2019 star ratings vs. 2022 star ratings.

Mrs. Danusis stepped in to discuss the process of identifying Rhode Island's lowest performing schools that need comprehensive support and improvement. Mrs. Danusis identified the schools targeted for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI). She also addressed CSI schools exiting this year. Schools exit CSI identification when they no longer meet the identification criteria for both the current year and the year in which they were identified. She explained that each CSI school will have a RIDE transformation specialist to work directly with their school team to create a comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP). Mrs. Danusis and Mr. Gausland addressed questions and concerns raised by council members.

f. PPSD Update - School Construction

Scott Sutherland, Chief of Staff, and Zachary Scott in collaboration with Mario Carreno presented the vision and opportunity for Providence Public Schools to council members. Mr. Sutherland provided a brief overview of his experience in Providence Public Schools.

He explained that he would be discussing the plan to have at least 10 new or new like schools in Providence by 2025 thanks to two school construction bonds that passed in November. He stated that a strategy to move forward with a plan of action to close two of the district's worse buildings, Broad and Lauro. This plan was put in place in terms of conditions, efficiency, school choice, and enrollment declines.

Chair DiCenso asked Mario Carreno to clarify and explain the process on how school closing recommendations are determined.

Mario explained that data from the city zone project manager, the SBA team, and the PPSD team, driven by the facility condition index made the necessary determinations. He explained that just looking at the data the school conditions are off the charts.

Chair DiCenso explained that being in a position herself, having to deliver news that a school must close or be remodeled, and new schools would be built, that this should be the most joyous time for the Providence community. All staff, teachers, aids, families brand new schools and remodels that are beyond warm, safe, and dry. She wanted to know how transparent the process was when making this decision. She explained that this was the opportunity to be very clear that this is a wonderful thing and to right the wrong by explaining how the process was followed. If the process was followed, then Providence did what every other school and district celebrated, and cut ribbons and had balloons, yet Providence was fighting about. She wanted to deliver the message that the process was followed, it was fair and equitable, and it was the right thing not just for the kids but for every single person that works in the buildings. She reiterated that she wanted everyone to know that Providence Public schools followed all the processes and procedures that every other district had to follow. This should be a celebration.

Member Gaines explained that it is not easy closing schools and no matter how great it sounds parents do not want to close the schools. She explained that she could understand if the department had a plan to give this information out to the public and the information was shared before. But that needs to be said.

Member Callahan asked for specifics regarding the process. She wanted to know what the steps were that were taken to make the decisions for closing the schools.

Mario Carreno explained that this was not the process that was intended but one that they are now reacting to. There is a plan and a process, which was to begin engaging stakeholders.

Chair DiCenso added that the plan was prepared to be announced for a certain date and time and it was leaked unfortunately behind the backs of everyone that sat at the table to make the plan and someone that was not at that table leaked the information. There were no secrets, just that the information was not scheduled to be communicated.

Mario Carreno explained that the information was not ready to be communicated since they were waiting for the new conditions assessment. You don't want to make final decisions without that data. Enrollment data also had just been released. Sound information is necessary prior to addressing communities of changes. He explained that we are moving forward with this amazing plan.

Chair DiCenso added that the process is the same for every city and town and was frustrating that there was no joy with this news.

Member Gaines added that it is no secret where the school conditions were even five -six years ago.

Mario Carreno provided detailed information on what some of the buildings look like. He added that once the plan was in place, next steps are to start to engage stakeholders.

Member Davis asked that Mr. Carreno please explain what it means to engage stakeholders.

Mr. Carreno stated that normally school building communities, school board meetings, teachers', city council, teachers' unions are all engaged once you have a developed plan in place. The amount of money also changed changing the plan as well as the enrollment data that changed over the past year and half.

Chair DiCenso asked what the declining enrollment data was for the two schools in question. Mr. Carreno stated that Broad Street had over 471 students earlier this decade down to 277, Carl Lauro is down to 450 students. He mentioned at one point the school had over 1000 students and that since the school is so large they have used it for swing space for D'Abate.

Mario Carreno explained the process in which data driven decisions were made regarding school building plans due to concerns raised that processes were not followed in the decisions that were made regarding Providence schools.

Mr. Scott explained that PPSD buildings have over \$600M in needed repairs and upgrades. With the bond, Providence is set to invest \$500M in its school buildings. In the next five years, we'll move from 5% to 50% of our buildings, becoming high quality facilities for learning. He added that PPSD wants to use all the data to guide the plan. He provided data from the Jacobs report which was done a few years ago, addressing the fact that there is more deterioration now than before. Mr. Carreno added that new data shows over 10 providence schools that are over 90% for replacement candidates.

Mr. Scott explained the need to invest in the buildings due to decades of neglect that have left Providence's schools in unacceptable conditions. The team provided visuals to illustrate the poor conditions of the schools and to also demonstrate work that has already been completed.

Member Callahan asked if it was being considered to use swing space.

Mr. Scott explained that PPSD is not using swing space and Mr. Carreno explained the reasoning behind why and which projects would be able to utilize swing space. In this case we don't need extra buildings due to enrollment data which is considered newer and fewer which receives more state aid.

Mr. Scott added that the use of the revolving fund, combined with state reimbursement and proposed bond results in the potential for almost \$500M in funding with just 10% of funding coming from the City of Providence. The team addressed the strategic facility investments, explaining that through the establishment of a new revolving fund, PPSD is able to convert an initial \$8M investment into \$50M over 10 years, enabling the district to make investments in facilities across the district while simultaneously investing bond funding in new construction. Work completed through the revolving fund in FY23 include, 8 gym floors repaired and refinished, 2-5 water filling stations at 33 schools, 6 new school boilers, completed over \$200K of upgrades to fire alarms and sprinkler systems, and completed over \$200K of masonry repairs. They mentioned what's coming which includes, the Narducci Learning Center at the former Windmill Elementary School, Hope High School Auditorium Renovation, the Hope High School Auditorium Entrance Area Renovation, Classical High School renovations, the new Spaziano Elementary School, and the new D'Abate Elementary School.

The plan going forward is a strategic approach to optimize school construction dollars and build 21st century learning spaces giving the students what they deserve. Enrollment was also discussed, and member Gaines commented on the fact to take into consideration that students can come back and to accommodate the buildings if demographics should change.

Mr. Scott mentioned that the plan going forward from what they have heard from the turnaround action plan is to increase the percentage of students who feel a sense of belonging at their school, increase the number of four-year-olds enrolled in high-quality Pre-K. Also, from community engagement over the last 3 years, including the last two months, PPSD should be thinking big in transforming the middle schools, moving faster to improve school facilities, and having a closer connection with families and their schools.

The team explained the new revolving fund, newer and fewer data driven decisions, school closures at the end of the 2022-2023 school year, additional considerations to accommodate enrollment shifts, the new facilities plan, and putting the plan into action. Additional considerations to accommodate enrollment shifts and the new facilities plan were discussed. Mr. Scott continued adding that no staff members will be laid off, parents will be supported, and no specialized school programs will close. Next steps include supporting families and staff, submitting stage 1 plan, responding to data and community feedback, exploring additional opportunities, and investing in and maintaining all PPSD facilities. The Council members, RIDE, and PPSD engaged in conversation related to the school facilities presented.

g. CTE Standards Approval

Deputy Commissioner Lisa Odom-Villella provided information regarding the updated, revised, CTE standards that were unanimously approved by the CTE Board and requested that the Council endorse the standards to support the CTE programs in RI schools.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Necessity of School Construction Approvals

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis.

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$331,965,251 for 4 school districts pursuant to 16-7-41.1 as follows (please note that when the applicable reimbursement share ratios are applied to the estimated total project costs noted below, the state share is expected to be \$235,665,688 which includes \$100,100,420 in pay-as-you-go funding From the Statewide School Construction Bond plus \$138,240,000 in pay-as-you-go funding that will be paid by a state-issued bond)

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Menu for Success

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Colleen Callahan

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the allocation of \$1,625,000 of the Fiscal Year 2023 SBA Capital Fund as follows.

Central Falls	\$125,000
Chariho	\$125,000
Coventry	\$125,000
Cranston	\$125,000
Davies	\$125,000
East Providence	\$125,000
Lincoln	\$125,000
Newport	\$125,000
Pawtucket	\$125,000
Providence	\$125,000
Warwick	\$125,000
Westerly	\$125,000
Woonsocket	\$125,000

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. CTE Standards Approval

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Karen Davis.

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$331,965,251 for 4 school districts pursuant to 16-7-41.1 as follows (please note that when the applicable reimbursement share ratios are applied to the estimated total project costs noted below, the state share is expected to be \$235,665,688 which includes \$100,100,420 in pay-as-you-go funding From the Statewide School Construction Bond plus \$138,240,000 in pay-as-you-go funding that will be paid by a state-issued bond)

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative and 0 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Mary Barden, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan,
Karen Davis, Patricia DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion duly made by Amy Beretta and seconded by Michael Almeida, it was

VOTED: That the meeting of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
Adjourns

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in
the negative, and 0 members abstained as follows:

YEAS: Michael Almeida, Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Patricia
DiCenso, Jo Eva Gaines

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.