



MINUTES OF THE MEETING
December 19, 2023

COUNCIL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Chair Grey 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 5:42 p.m.

Present: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez,
*Lisa Leaheey, Robert Mitchell

*Ex-officio member

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education accepts the agenda for the December 19, 2023, meeting

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the October 24, 2023, meeting

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Infante-Green initiated her report by thanking everyone for joining and for their hard work and support to ensure that our state education system is moving in the right direction. Her initial discussion in the report centered around the RICAS Rockstars where she shared that RIDE had recently launched the 2023 RICAS Rockstars series which aims to showcase schools' exemplary efforts in supporting students and enhancing school culture high Burrillville Steere Farm Elementary School and Coventry's Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School. Following that, she proceeded to discuss RIDE's observance of National Computer Science Education week. She noted that Governor McKee issued a proclamation acknowledging the week, and RIDE released numerous student and teacher spotlights. These spotlights illustrate how computer science programs are aiding students in skill development and exploration of in-demand careers. She highlighted educator Marta Hidalgo of Mt. Pleasant High School and Diana Tavares, junior at Central Falls High School. Continuing, she addressed the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant, a \$3.2million grant aimed at improving data collection concerning college and career readiness across the state. The grant administered by the U.S. Department of Education is designed to assist states in enhancing the quality, reliability, and accessibility of education data. She continued sharing that RIDE in partnership with Governor McKee, will be issuing a year-end review press release that will highlight our successes and accomplishments for 2023. She noted that RIDE has awarded multiple grants, opened new 21st century school facilities, launched new tools and programs to support our students and school community. Lastly, she shared that RIDE is working on a report to detail the historic investments being made in school facilities across Rhode Island. She encouraged everyone to check out the multiple media stories that were published about the new space for the children.

4. OPEN FORUM

Seven individuals addressed the Council.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Right to Read

Chair Grey asked for a motion to table the Right to Read Update

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education tables discussion item 5a. Right to Read to the next Council meeting

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Chair Grey asked for a motion to change the order of the agenda

On a motion duly made by Robert Mitchell and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education change the order of the agenda

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Necessity of School Construction

Chief Operating Officer Mario Carreno initiated the presentation to talk about the importance of school construction. He mentioned that all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) underwent a rigorous multi-stage process, where they shared intricate details for the team to examine and review. The eleven districts under discussion will have a substantial impact on approximately 25,000 students. It was emphasized that this approval is the largest ever. The plan encompasses the establishment of four new high schools, marking the highest number approved by the Council in the past two decades. Notably, it involves the most extensive single-school project in state history, featuring Unified Pawtucket High School, Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Hope, and a new South Kingstown High School. It was pointed out that the total age of the high schools being replaced amounts to 400 years. Furthermore, there are three additional new schools, including a new BF Norton for Cumberland, and two Prek-8 schools in Providence. Along with expansions and repairs in Lincoln and Coventry. Moreover, since 2019, districts and municipalities in Rhode Island have either constructed or are currently in the process of building 50 new schools in the state. This is equivalent to the construction of 1,400 schools in California over the same time period. He shared that the origin of this goes back to 2017 when RIDE and the state carried out a comprehensive assessment of school facilities statewide. They identified over \$4 billion in current dollars needed for warmth, safety, and dry conditions. He further mentioned that fortunately, the General Assembly and the Governor enacted incentives and legislation to motivate communities to make progress in addressing these needs. Additionally, he conveyed that RIDE is allocating the remaining \$122 million from the state's school construction bond directly into the classrooms.

c. MET Center Property Transfer

Chief Officer Mario Carreno began the presentation with a concise overview, he mentioned that in FY 2010, the Council approved \$8.8M for RIDE to acquire land and construct the East Bay Paul Crowley Met Center building in Newport. The property, purchased for \$415,000, encompassed land for the new school and a section of the Newport Housing Authority's Florence Gray Center, known as the Gallagher Wing. Following site remediation costs, the Newport Housing Authority refunded \$220,000 of the sale price, and the building officially opened in 2014. He mentioned that the Met Center has had minimal utilization of the Gallagher Wing in recent years, and the facility has accumulated deferred maintenance requirements that require attention from the State. He highlighted that the Newport Housing Authority expressed interest in reclaiming the wing to transform the entire facility into a Community Center. The Newport Housing Authority holds the right of first refusal for this property. Council approval would enable RIDE and the Met Center to present at the State Properties Committee, facilitating the transfer of the property.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Approval of Necessity of School Construction

Bristol Warren

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Mary Barden, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$157,368,562 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 \$99,142,195, which includes \$18,409,095 in pay-as-you-go funding)

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Burrillville

On a motion duly made by Robert Mitchell and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$6,285,682 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 \$2,979,416, which includes \$389,754 in pay-as-you-go funding)

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Coventry

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$25,000,000 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 \$12,050,000, which includes \$2,237,768 in pay-as-you-go funding)

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Cumberland

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$71,454,347 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 \$29,019,120, which includes \$4,790,695 in pay-as-you-go funding)

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Jamestown

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$1,414,476 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 \$495,067, which includes \$64,737 in pay-as-you-go funding)

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Lincoln

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$30,000,000 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 \$10,500,000, which includes \$1,853,569 in pay-as-you-go funding)

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Pawtucket

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$326,187,328 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 \$261,928,424, which includes \$48,665,170 in pay-as-you-go funding)

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Providence

On a motion duly made by Karen Davis and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$235,000,000 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 \$188,470,000 which includes \$34,996,734 in pay-as-you-go funding)

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

RINI

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Robert Mitchell it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$21,739,625 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 \$6,521,888 which includes \$1,211,009 in pay-as-you-go funding)

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

South Kingstown

On a motion duly made by Mary Barden and seconded by Karen Davis it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$150,000,000 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 \$52,500,000 which includes \$9,748,398 in pay-as-you-go funding)

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative,

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Tiverton

On a motion duly made by Mary Barden and seconded by Karen Davis it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve the necessity of school construction projects totaling \$11,995,600 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 \$4,198,460, which includes \$549,004 in pay-as-you-go funding)

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. MET Center Property Transfer

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Marta Martinez, it was,

VOTED: That the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education approve transferring the Gallagher Wing and allow the Met Center to proceed to State Properties Committee for final approval.

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

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey,
Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

DISCUSSION ITEM

b. Charter School New Schools & Expansion

State Strategy and Student Opportunity Officer Stephen Osborn began the presentation by providing a background of the true nature of a charter school. He shared that Charter schools are public schools as defined by Rhode Island General Law §16-77-2.1. This includes district charter schools, independent charter schools, and mayoral academies.

Additionally, “All students and prospective students at a charter school shall be deemed to the public-school students, having all the same rights under federal and Rhode Island law as students and prospective students at a non-chartered public school.” §16-77-3.1(b) He added that no charter schools in Rhode Island can be managed or operated by a for-profit entity. § 16-77-3.1(d) He also added that Council approval is required for the “establishment or continuation” of charter schools. §16-77-5.1(b) Additionally, charter schools are intended to be vanguards, laboratories, and an expression of the on-going and vital state interest in the improvement of education. § 16-77-3.1.(b)

Mr. Osborn provided details on school funding and facilities, emphasizing that charter schools adhere to the funding formula where money follows the student. Independent and mayoral academies receive federal funds directly for Title I, IDEA, and other federally funded programs. The remaining in-district charter schools obtain funds through their authorizing district. Schools experience a 7% withholding of their per pupil rates. Additionally, local payments to mayoral academies may be further reduced by the per pupil value of teacher retirement costs associated with the unfunded liability, as calculated by the state’s actuary. Mr. Osborn mentioned that characters are required to lease or purchase their facilities, and they can receive up to 30% housing aid reimbursement for projects approved under SBA. §16-77.1-5.

Director of School Opportunities Andrew MacMannis proceeded to explain the Charter School Admissions process, emphasizing that charters must conduct blind lotteries to allocate seats and manage a waitlist. He highlighted the option for schools to prioritize siblings, children of staff, and children of founders, and the possibility of using weights or defined percentages based on the enrolling district. Additionally, he mentioned RIDE’s oversight involving the EnrollIRI student application system, with all charters participating to facilitate student enrollment. Furthermore, Mr. Osborn pointed out that RIDE actively monitors and gathers data on charter school lotteries.

Using visuals, he illustrated the parent demand for charters and the community demand. He referred to the findings of the National Charter School Study III 2023 conducted by Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes and elaborated on the outcomes.

Following that, Mr. Osborn shared details regarding the factors influencing recommendations for new or expanding charter public schools, outlining the timeline of the application and evaluation process. He also highlighted the priorities concerning new seats and the requirements outlined in § 16-77.3-3 for K-12 Council considerations.

Mr. Osborn, Mr. MacMannis, and Charter School Coordinator Jermaine Curtis discussed the specific expansion requests for RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts and the new charter request for the Medical Preparatory Academy of Rhode Island. They provided detailed information regarding key recommendation drivers, public comments that were received and offered a school comparison between the charter school and other schools in the district.

The council expressed their concerns and asked questions, to which Mr. Osborn responded appropriately.

7. **ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion duly made by Marta Martinez and seconded by Colleen Callahan 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: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, Karen Davis, Michael Grey, Marta Martinez, Robert Mitchell

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.