

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Public Hearing
Mayoral Control
March 9, 2010

Minutes

Attendance: President Evans, Commissioners Cruz, Elliott, Powell, White and Williams. Board Clerk Shanai Lee.

President Evans convened the public hearing to gather citizens' input on the proposal for mayoral control of the Rochester City School District at 5:35 p.m.

President Evans welcomed the audience and asked that speakers come to the podium to address the Board.

Chris Fitzstevens

Ms. Fitzstevens stated that she is a city resident and parent of two children who have been students in the District. She asked that the community explore mayoral control as an option to improve student performance throughout the community.

Ricardo Adams

Mr. Adams stated that he is an involved parent. He recognized that the Board has always been available to the community and engaged parents, students, and community members in resolving issues that effect student performance. Mr. Adams also mentioned that the Mayor should make an effort to provide employment opportunities for city residents to address the level of poverty in the city. He concluded by saying that drastic change does not always lead to positive results.

Mary Adams

Ms. Adams stated that she is a parent and she opposes mayoral control. She spoke about the need to address past performance in order to determine future outcomes. Ms. Adams also spoke about the Mayor's campaign and his record of engaging parents and the community. She urged the community to carefully review the Mayor's proposal for control of the District.

Myra Brown

Ms. Brown stated that she is a parent, nurse, and community organizer and opposes mayoral control. She said the model is based on the disenfranchisement of communities of people of color. Ms. Brown noted that the disempowerment and disenfranchisement of the community is morally wrong and urged the community to oppose mayoral control of the District. She mentioned that the model lacks transparency, alienates parents,

reduces access to leadership, and has not shown evidence of improving student performance.

Andrew Ray

Dr. Ray stated that he is opposed to mayoral control. He spoke about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy and his work in ensuring the right to vote for members of the community. Dr. Ray also voiced concern about the mayor's proposal and his unwillingness to further consider consolidation efforts prior to vying for control of the District. He urged the Board and community to oppose mayoral control of the District.

Charles Richardson

Mr. Richardson stated that is opposed to mayoral control. He asked that the Board assume a leadership role in the District's schools. Mr. Richardson said recent conversations around mayoral control have been beneficial in that the community has begun to focus on the need to educate the city's youth.

Juan Padilla

Mr. Padilla stated that he supports an elected board of education based on the principle of participatory democracy. He described mayoral control as a controversy dealing primarily with money and politics, and noted that mayoral control is a governance structure that only occurs in urban communities and contributes to the disenfranchisement of minorities. Mr. Padilla called for a plan of action to oppose mayoral control, and urged the Board to take a stance to resist the Mayor's proposal.

Rev. Dr. Charles Thurman

Rev. Dr. Thurman thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak on the topic of mayoral control, and said that he is representing the Baptist Ministers Alliance, is a former school teacher and administer, and parent of District students. Rev. Dr. Thurman presented pros and cons of mayoral control, and noted that the governance structure has not presented evidence of improving academic performance. Rev. Dr. Thurman urged the Board and the community to oppose mayoral control.

Yvette Singletary

Ms. Singletary highlighted the widening achievement gap by presenting data on the academic performance of minority students. She stated that mayoral control is promoted in urban districts because of gains the governance structure has demonstrated by increasing accountability and achievement and exercising greater control of personnel. Ms. Singletary stated that she supports mayoral control.

Hubert Wilkerson

Mr. Wilkerson said that he actively campaigned for candidates during the last school board election. He said the vote of citizens should count, and urged the Board to take a stance against mayoral control. Mr. Wilkerson stated that the community wants an elected board and intends to oppose mayoral control.

Howard Eagle

Mr. Eagle said he a parent of students in the District, and is a former and future candidate of the Rochester Board of Education. He noted that mayoral control has failed everywhere the governance structure has been implemented. Mr. Eagle said the Mayor has other priorities, such as crime and economic development that should be addressed before the he considers control of the District. Mr. Eagle urged the Board to take a stance against mayoral control, and not dismiss the vote of citizens.

George Moses

Mr. Moses stated that he opposes mayoral control because the Mayor has not engaged the city's youth or facilitated coordinated services to address the needs of the city's youth. Mr. Moses noted that the city's youth should not be used as part of an experiment to better education, he also noted that he is opposed to the amount of control that the Mayor would have his Mayor's proposal. He urged parents and the community to oppose mayoral control.

Ed Wesneski

Mr. Wesneski stated that he is opposed to mayoral control. He asked how the Mayor would assume control of the District in addition to the other priorities of city government. Mr. Wesneski urged the Board to support democracy and take a stance against mayoral control.

Tim Adams

Mr. Adams stated that he is a city resident and opposes mayoral control. He noted that the Mayor's proposal is undemocratic. Mr. Adams expressed concern that the Mayor has not engaged the city's youth and the community as a whole.

Nia Frost

Ms. Frost stated that she is a parent and city resident, and noted that she has not yet formed an opinion for or against mayoral control because she has not received enough information on the topic.

Brian Erway

Mr. Erway expressed concern that mayoral control is being considered as a preferred governance structure without demonstrated evidence of success. He urged the Board to support democracy and take a stance against mayoral control.

Bishop Christopher Tillman

Bishop Tillman stated that the current governance structure of the District allows for community involvement, while the Mayor's proposal will not allow for the same level of engagement. He urged the community and the Board to take a stance against mayoral control.

Greg Walters

Mr. Walters presented socioeconomic data including the city's poverty level and teenage pregnancy rates, and expressed concern about the Mayor's priorities and ability to combat the widening achievement gap while addressing the needs of city government.

Lori Thomas

Ms. Thomas thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak on the topic of mayoral control. She spoke of previous opportunities that she has had to work with the Board to address issues of parents and the community as a whole. Ms. Thomas urged the community and the Board to take a stance against mayoral control.

President Evans thanked the speakers for their comments and announced the future schedule of budget meetings.

President Evans concluded the hearing at 7:47 p.m.