

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee Meeting
December 2, 2015

MINUTES

Attending

Commissioners - Board Vice President Cynthia Elliott (Chair), Commissioner Mary Adams

CIGR Parent Representative – Felix Jacobs

Student Representative to the Board – Savion Rambert

Presenters – Chief Michael Ciminelli, Commander Joseph Morabito, and Sergeant Laird (Rochester Police Department); Lori Baldwin (Director of Safety and Security), Adele Bovard (Deputy Superintendent of Administration), Dr. Christiana Otuwa (Deputy Superintendent of Teaching & Learning)

Board Staff – Mia Johnson

Board Vice President Elliott called the meeting to order at 6:05PM.

I. Review the Minutes of October 13, 2015 CIGR Meetings

Motion by Vice President Elliott to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2015 CIGR Meeting. Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of the Parent Representative.

II. Viewing and Discussion of Video Clip – Student, Teacher, and Police: Student Slammed by Police Officer in South Carolina

Vice President Elliott announced that the purposes of the committee meeting are to ensure everyone in the District is treated with dignity and respect, review the footage of the Safety Resource Officer (SRO) slamming the student in a South Carolina classroom, and gain an understanding of how SROs operate in the Rochester City School District.

In response to the video, Chief Ciminelli stated the State chose to criminalize a situation that was an internal school issue that led to the presence of the police officer in the classroom to make an arrest. There is no similar statute here and an issue of a cell phone does not fall under the role of a SRO. He stated that SROs are trained to use force when justified in same way that other police officers are; however, he did not see a threat, self-defense situation, or a defense of another person in the video. He stated that SROs are not trained to knock someone over in a chair as shown in the video and there are other techniques with the first approach being a verbal, conversation approach.

Vice President Elliott asked about the techniques of the Rochester Police Department can be used as an alternative to the video. Chief Ciminelli responded there are a number of techniques: engage in conversation, moving the arm first, and an escort position. He stated that he would be happy to bring in the Defense and Tactics instructors to demonstrate the techniques used for the Board.

Vice President Elliott stated that the police officer in the video appeared to have no value for the child. She further asked Chief Ciminelli what is the frame of reference to handle situations based on the individual's race. Chief Ciminelli responded that police officers are trained and supposed to act and deal appropriately to a threat without regard to who the person is. He continued by stating that the Rochester Police Department's aspiration is for all people in the Rochester community to feel comfortable approaching a Rochester police officer for help when needed. He stated that there are over 700 individual officers, but that is the value and aspiration of the entire department.

Vice President Elliott asked if Rochester police officers receive training around cultural competency or bias. Chief Ciminelli responded that there is training that begins in the police academy with recruited individuals attending community meetings and clergy members meeting with recruited individuals to discuss community issues. He also described that the entire police department attended the Spirit In Service training that began as an initiative of Chief Sheppard where the department's core values are outlined.

Student Representative to the Board Savion Rambert asked if there is a challenge for students in his age range to gravitate towards Rochester police officers. Chief Ciminelli responded that it is harder. He described the department conducted an independent survey through Cornell and found that there were segments of the community and age groups with lower levels of trust for the police and were more likely not to have an interaction with an actual police officer. He described that police officers are encouraged to talk with community members. He also stated that he spoke to a number of students who stated that the only police officer they trusted was their SRO because they have the opportunity to get to know the SRO.

Vice President Elliott inquired about the roles of the police officer and the teacher in the video and what should have happened. She further described that the student in the video found school to be a safe environment after losing both her mother and grandmother. Chief Ciminelli responded because there was not an imminent threat, such a removal is not something he would not want a Rochester SRO to do.

Wilson graduate and member of the District Media Team Layne Wall asked Chief Ciminelli what steps does the Rochester Police Department take to influence students to become police officers. Chief Ciminelli responded that the department does significant recruitment efforts. Vice President Elliott responded that the Public Safety program, a collaborative effort between City of Rochester and the Rochester City School District, is housed at the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center where high school students learn about the police, fire, EMT, and 911 department. She further stated that the program has a high attendance rate and has opened students' perspective on a number of career pathways.

Leadership Academy for Young Men senior James Weathers stated that he attends the Public Safety program and has a great experience. School Chief Dr. Ray Giamartino stated that Chief Ciminelli has reached out the District to form a partnership.

Parent Advisory Council Chair Ericka Simmons asked about disciplinary actions for SROs that may mistreat students. Chief Ciminelli responded that if there is a case of excessive force, there would be a review process and discipline protocols. Commissioner Adams asked what percent of those complaints result in a finding that warrants a discipline action. Chief Ciminelli responded that he currently does not have the number, but it is published quarterly on the City's website.

Member of the Community Task Force's Code of Conduct Committee Cynthia Herriott asked, in response Chief Ciminelli's statement that SROs are not advised to intervene in policy violations similar to the video and did not find that in the RPD's operating procedures, where can this be found because it impacts the Code of Conduct drafts. Chief Ciminelli stated that it can be found in the contract with the District and the General Orders Manual as a starting point as well as Sergeant Laird's directives. Sergeant Laird responded that the SRO job is a majority counseling and mentoring with a small percentage as law enforcement – serving as a mentor, teacher, and building relationships with students. She stated that SROs are well trained and encouraged to be involved in the school not only as law enforcement. Sergeant Laird stated that SROs create class presentations and provide counseling to students.

Vice President Elliott asked if Sergeant Laird and Ms. Herriott could meet to discuss the role of the SROs for the Code of Conduct. Ms. Herriott agreed. Chief Ciminelli responded that different principals within the schools have different views of the SRO and their role on the team.

Mother of nine Renee Judkins stated that there is a protocol for police officers who misbehave and other police officers on the news went through similar protocols, but still work on the force. She further stated that she is discouraged as parent because she is unsure if the police officer that may interact with her children had a disciplinary action. Chief Ciminelli responded that the department takes preventative steps and during his time as Chief, he has disciplined officers and the disciplinary data is available to the public without individual names. He further stated that the system is not perfect and when evidence of misconduct emerges, the department does deal with it.

Ms. Judkins asked about the qualifications of potential police officers. Chief Ciminelli described the application process – civil service exam, thorough investigation and background check, psychological review, four months of the police academy, and several months of field experience.

Mr. Rambert asked if SROs have challenges building relationships with students if they are disrespected by students. Sergeant Laird stated that officers who decide to be SROs want to become SROs.

III. Viewing and Discussion of Video Clip – Teacher Bullied by Students in Chicago Public Schools

Vice President Elliott asked Chief Ciminelli and Sergeant Laird how SROs would respond the incident in this video. Chief Ciminelli stated that the presence of a SRO would have been appropriate in that classroom to stabilize the situation, assess what actually happened, and utilizing a team approach with school leadership on the best remedy to stop the situation. Sergeant Laird expressed the challenge of commenting on the video without context or background and not sure what a SRO would do.

Vice President Elliott asked Director of Safety and Security Lori Baldwin how School Security Officers (SSO) would respond to the situation. Ms. Baldwin stated that if the teacher could have someone leave the classroom to get help, an SSO who has built relationships would come in, and the teacher needed to exit the classroom.

Vice President Elliott asked Deputy Superintendent of Teaching & Learning Dr. Christiana Otuwa to assess the teacher in the video. Dr. Otuwa responded that she is unsure if the substitute teacher had experience working in an urban school and as a substitute teacher, she should have established a structure and role as a teacher. She further stated that she hopes that the substitute teachers of that school are provided with professional development and supports prior to entering the classroom. She described that when she was a principal, if there were substitute teachers in her school, she would conduct rounds as a system to ensure the substitute teachers were fine. Dr. Otuwa stated that in the video, teachers and other adults should have been monitoring the hallway of the video and responded accordingly.

Parent Representative Felix Jacobs described a time when he, Vice President Elliott, and a community member toured the Integrated Arts & Technology high school and a substitute teacher was challenged with keeping students within the classroom. He further stated that Integrated Arts & Technology high school needed someone to monitor the substitute teachers.

Mr. Rambert stated that after viewing the breakdown of SROs per a school in Rochester, there should be more than one SRO per a building to respond to situations similar to the video. Chief Ciminelli responded that there are funding and budgetary components that determine the amount of SROs.

Vice President Elliott stated that at the last Board business meeting, there were a number of complaints regarding safety issues at Edison, but during her visit, she found that no adults were in the hallways. She further stated that students need adult presence to develop a structure, sense of community, and relationships.

Commissioner Adams stated there is a need to distinguish between disciplinary behaviors and crime. She further stated that the students' behaviors in the video did not escalate to crime and if the behaviors were addressed earlier it would not have escalated. She explained that more SROs is not the solution because there would be a correlation between schools

with more SROs and a better school climate which it not the case. She described that there are other factors including leadership, climate, and staffing stability.

Deputy Superintendent of Administration Adele Bovard stated that over the course of eight months, there have been discussions with Commander Joseph Morabito and Dr. Otuwa about the different roles and expectations of SROs, SSOs, and school administration. She explained that there will be another training in January and the summer for SSOs and SROs to create a team.

Mr. Weather responded that the other students in the video should have stepped up as a leader to help the teacher, but there is a fear among students that they will be outcast. Mr. Wall stated that is why he is interested in seeing more students get involved in programs that link them to careers in law enforcement. An Edison student stated that he has seen good relationships between teachers and students, does not see any fear in the building, students have good relationships with SROs and SSOs, and the problems that currently exist are due to its large size and the merging of different schools.

Ms. Simmons asked about the relationship between the SROs and the SSOs and their training. She stated that she has a fear regarding the cultural competence and awareness among staff members with young black male students. She described that a problem exists when there is an incident with an SSO and parents being talked out of filing a complaint.

Vice President Elliott read data provided by Ms. Baldwin and there has been a significant reduction in student arrests from last year to this year. She commended the District and Rochester Police Department.

IV. Review of Agreement regarding Services of School Resource Officers (SROs)

Vice President Elliott stated that the purpose of the contract review is provide a recommendation to the full Board at the December business meeting. Commissioner Adams asked if the provisions of the contract were the same and stated that she would like to see a provision that distinguishes between crime and non-criminal student behavior. Commissioner Adams supported recommending it to the Board, but thinks the provisions should be different and could be done before the Code of Conduct is passed. She stated that last year, she reluctantly voted for the SRO contract due to unfinished work and the same contract has been presented this year. She stated that the District should do more work to outline the provisions. Sergeant Laird responded that it is difficult to put this job on paper because it is dynamic.

Commissioner Adams stated that the language of the draft Code of Conduct is guidance and does not define crime, but define an expectation. Commander Morabito responded that the contract and the Code of Conduct can co-exist because the Code of Conduct is for the entire school community while the contract is directed just for the SROs. Chief Ciminelli stated that the department is committed to dialogue, the process, achieving a resolution, and training the SROs.

Ms. Herriott described her experience as former law enforcement, a mother of a child in the District, and a member of the Community Task Force. She emphasized as communication continues, the general orders will inform the discussions around the Code of Conduct and outline how the District will respond to it.

Member of the Community Task Force Barb Van Kerkhove stated that the Community Task Force wants the Code of Conduct to be for the entire school community and asked if the SRO contract could state that the SROs will adhere to the Code of Conduct. Chief Ciminelli responded that the purpose of the contract is to govern the business relationship between the City and the District and it could be included in the policy manual because police officers do not read the contract and other police officers aside from the SRO interact with students.

Ms. Judkins described that her 7 year old son was arrested under mental hygiene, but most parents are not informed of the protocol or if their child is arrested. She asked if the protocol will be a part of the Code of Conduct. Chief Ciminelli responded that the protocol is making the parent aware if a student is under the age of 16 and both the District and/or the RPD are supposed to inform the parent. Sergeant Laird stated that on the juvenile contact form, there has to be an indication of attempts to notify a parent. Ms. Herriott stated that the District and RPD have different notification requirements. Commissioner Adams stated that the policy does state that the school principal should call the parent regarding an arrest. She stated that the RPD calling regarding an arrest should be outlined in the contract as well.

Commissioner Adams made the motion to advance the SRO contract to the full Board for consideration. Vice President Elliott seconded it. Vote 2-0.

Vice President Elliott thanked Chief Ciminelli for participating in the Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee meetings. Chief Ciminelli invited members of the Board to participate in a training that the SROs undergo. Vice President Elliott suggested that the Parent Advisory Council can host such a training.

V. Legislative Agenda

Mr. Jacobs stated that the new NYS Board of Regents Chancellor will be selected and that a discussion among the Board should occur to discuss the qualifications and criteria of the next Chancellor. Commissioner Adams asked Board Staff Mia Johnson to research how the NYS Chancellor is selected. Mr. Jacobs stated that a NYS Chancellor should be familiar with issues impacting urban districts. Vice President Elliott asked Ms. Johnson to contact Executive Director of Conference of Big 5 School Districts Georgia Ascitutto regarding the qualifications and criteria of a NYS Chancellor. Vice President Elliott made a motion to recommend the 2016 Legislative Agenda to the full Board at the December business meeting. Commissioner Adams seconded it with concurrence from Mr. Jacobs. Commissioner Adams stated that if there are priorities among the 2016 Legislative Agenda Items, she wants the school climate legislation with funding as a priority. Vice President Elliott stated that Commissioner Willa Powell is president of the NYS School Board Association and talking with her about making this a priority.

VI. Miscellaneous: Receivership Forum

Vice President Elliott thanked all those who attended and participated in the Forum. Mr. Jacobs stated that more forums are needed. He described his visit to the Freedom School where all the students were involved in fights and experienced trauma. He expressed a need to connect with parents through the forums. Vice President Elliott stated that there must be a connection with students.

Motion by Vice President Elliott to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. **Adopted 2-0.** Meeting adjourned at 7:47PM.