

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Business Meeting
June 18, 2015

Attendance: President White, Vice President Elliott and Commissioners Adams, Campos, Cruz, Elliott and Powell; Superintendent Bolgen Vargas; Board Clerk Shanai Lee.

President White convened the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

- I. The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by a young audience member selected by President White.
- II. **Acceptance of Minutes:** Motion to accept the minutes of the May 28th Business Meeting and June 4th Special Meeting was made by Commissioner Evans and seconded by Commissioner Cruz. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.
- III. **Recognition:** The Rochester Board of Education recognized Serenity Rogers, a 6th Grade student at Virgil Grissom School No. 7, with the I Believe Award. Serenity exemplifies perseverance, tenacity and good citizenship. These three qualities have played an integral role in her success as a friend, student and community member. Serenity constantly displays the qualities that are necessary for success and growth. Academically, she has grown consistently since being a student at School 7. On her most recent 5th Grade NYS ELA assessment Serenity earned a score of 3 and her 6th Grade NWEA scores reflect another successful year. Serenity is a self-motivated student that regularly looks to help others either socially or academically.
- IV. **Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item:** Staff member Diane Hamilton spoke about the need to address reductions in security staff in the District's elementary schools.
- V. **Speakers Not Addressing an Agenda Item:** Parents Jenny Lieske and Bridget Monroe spoke about the challenges that exist in the Montessori Academy, School No. 53 sharing facilities with John Walton Spencer, School No. 16 at the Dr. Freddie Thomas High School Campus.
- VI. **Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Vargas delivered a presentation on the District's plan for the transportation of secondary students. He spoke about the recent agreement between the District and the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA also known as RTS). In discussing the solution, Dr. Vargas spoke about how most students in grades 7 through 12 will receive the same service via traditional "yellow bus" service or express routes that bypass downtown provided by RTS. Dr. Vargas indicated that the recent agreement with RTS does pose a significant financial challenge to the District, in that with the solution the District will have to bear the burden of a \$7.6 million increase in service costs from RTS over last year's budget. The increased costs to RTS is associated with a \$10.6 million overall increase in the District's projections for transportation. To support the projected increase in transportation costs, Dr. Vargas noted that he would appeal to the State governments for one-time assistance and obtain funds from external sources to avoid making cuts to District programs and services.

While addressing the recent agreement with RTS, Dr. Vargas spoke about the options considered to reduce transportation costs in the 2015-2016 fiscal year. The options were: 1) purchase RTS bus passes for District and charter school students that are no longer served under the RTS contract (a potential

savings of \$2.8 million could be realized by the District); and 2) purchase RTS bus passes for all secondary students with the exception of those enrolled in the Urban-Suburban interdistrict choice program (a potential savings of \$9.9 million could be realized by the District).

In concluding the presentation, Dr. Vargas stated the following recommendations for consideration by the Board: 1) approve the RTS contract and 2015-16 transportation plan; 2) focus on obtaining state aid for cost increases; 3) work on long-term solutions that lower costs, beginning in 2016-17; and 4) encourage increased enrollment in neighborhood schools to lower transportation costs at all grade levels.

Referencing the loss of anticipated efficiency savings amounting to \$2.7 million, Commissioner Adams asked why the proposed agreement with RTS undermines these anticipated savings given that the Board accepted related saving strategies at a previous meeting. Dr. Vargas mentioned that conditions have changed because of the District's programming. He invited Michael Schmidt, Chief of Operations, to address Commissioner Adams's concerns. Mr. Schmidt responded that the anticipated savings were related to the District being able to aggressively tier the start times of elementary schools using a reduced amount of contracted yellow bus service. He added, given that the current agreement with RTS calls for a reduced amount of transportation routes the District will have to increase the amount of contracted yellow bus service to transport those students that cannot be accommodated by RTS routes. Commissioner Adams asked whether or not this recent change would lead to the District revisiting the start times of elementary schools. Dr. Vargas stated that the Administration is working to bring stability to the system and does not plan to revisit start times of elementary schools.

Noting a recent Finance Committee meeting where Jeff Adair of RTS was present, Commissioner Powell spoke about her concerns with the rationale for reduced RTS busses and routes. She noted that members of the Finance Committee were told that the RTS reduced the number of dedicated routes due to a lack of federal funding to replace existing fleet (i.e. aging busses). She also noted that Dr. Vargas's presentation indicated that the increase in the cost of transportation is partially due to the District providing yellow bus service for students of the Young Mothers and Interim Health Academy program. Commissioner Powell stated that these students have always been transported by yellow bus service, so any increase in transportation cost should not be associated with the program.

Vice President Elliott expressed concerns about how the potential costs with the new transportation scheme were presented by Dr. Vargas. She indicated that the presentation did not clearly indicate which costs were due to RTS and which were due to increased yellow bus service for elementary and secondary students.

VII. Board Reports:

Audit Committee

Chair Mary Adams: The Audit Committee did not meet in May 2015. The Committee is scheduled to meet in July to review the Office of Auditor General Risk Assessment and Audit Plan for the 2015-16 school year. Commissioner Adams noted that the Auditor General has started the District Risk Assessment process. She requested that each Board Commissioner be available for individual Risk Assessment meetings with the Auditor General. This will ensure that the input of all school commissioners is included in this required annual process.

Finance Committee

Chair Jose Cruz: The Finance Committee met on Thursday, June 11th to consider Resolution Nos. 2014-15: 716 through 730, 736, and 741 through 744. The Finance Committee reviewed proposed

amendments to the 2014-15 RCSD budget and recommends approval of the amendments. Members of the Finance Committee recommend approval of the May 2015 Financial Report. Commissioner Cruz made a motion to accept the report, seconded by Commissioner Evans. Motion carries 7-0. The following resolutions were reviewed by the Finance Committee, and are advanced to the Board with recommendation: Resolution 716 for Food Services; Resolutions 717 through 720 for Procurement; Resolutions 721 through 729 for Educational Facilities; and Resolutions 730 and 736 for Other.

The members of the Finance Committee also received a briefing of the changes to the existing transportation structure in the District, which will result in many more students being transported on yellow buses for an additional cost of approximately \$11M. This is to accommodate changes in the District's contract with RTS, which involves a 40% reduction in the number of buses used for RCSD student transportation. The decreases in the number of RTS buses transporting students is not only due to safety considerations, but also to maximize operational efficiencies and accommodate the federal funding schedule for replacing buses. The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 16th, following Board Governance and Policy Committee meetings.

Excellence in Student Achievement Committee

Chair Malik Evans: The Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting was held on June 16th. The Committee received several presentations providing information on graduation rates for the 2011 Cohort; receivership and NYSED's related accountability metrics; and an overview of the District's School Comprehensive Education Plans. The Committee intends to concentrate on changing school leadership; the graduation rates of students of the Rochester International Academy and ELL students throughout the District to address the needs of this population; and vacant administrative positions, particularly the Director of Pupil Services position, and efforts to fill these vacancies with professionals with a significant amount of urban experience. The next ESA Committee meeting: is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14 following the CIGR Committee meeting.

Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee (CIGR)

Chair Cynthia Elliott: The Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee met on Tuesday, June 16th to discuss changes in student transportation and the impact on student placement and safety in the downtown corridor. Director of Student Placement, Barbara Goldammer, reported that 1500-1700 secondary students have been placed so far for the 2015-16 school year. She described plans for conducting Open Houses at schools to enable parents to learn about each school and the programs offered. The District is looking at ways to reach out to parents who have been less actively involved in the registration process, focusing on schools within close proximity to the student's residence, their academic history, and interests. In terms of improving safety downtown, Ms. Goldammer explained that the District's practice has been to transfer students who have been subject to bullying or other types of altercations to another school. With regard to the student(s) who have participated in these altercations, she emphasized the importance of retaining these students in the same school with staff members who know them and are able to intervene effectively.

Members of the Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee also debated the planned move of All City High School to the North Clinton Avenue location, noting potential problems with its proximity to the downtown Transit Center. Dr. Otuwa explained that the school schedule has been expanded from 7AM to 7PM to allow small groups of students to attend classes at any given time, thereby preventing a large influx of students into this downtown location at the same time.

The Director of Safety & Security, Lori Baldwin, reported that significant improvements have been made in terms of safety and the flow of students through the Transit Center. With fewer students traveling through the Transit Center, those creating disruptions will be more apparent and prominent and

this will facilitate the work of police and safety personnel. One of the concerns that was raised in the meeting is of students’ “copycat” behavior in acting out to receive media attention. The Committee would like to discourage this behavior by urging local media outlets to minimize coverage of these incidents, particularly of the students involved.

Committee members also discussed safety/security issues that may arise during the summer, and Ms. Goldammer offered to provide an overview of the summer programs and student transportation arrangements designed to deter altercations among students.

The CIGR Committee also considered goals for this year and the importance of developing a framework for communicating priorities to parents and community residents. A lively discussion ensued about whether the focus should be primarily communicating/informing parents and the larger community about District issues and priorities, or to promote parent and community empowerment to drive improvements in each school. Committee members also discussed the importance of identifying specific strategies for nurturing and reinforcing their child’s education.

A decision was made to invite the deputy superintendents and the Communications Chief to the next CIGR meeting to provide input regarding implementing the Communications Plan. The next CIGR Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 14th, at 6:00PM.

Policy Committee

Chair Willa Powell: On Thursday, June 11th the Policy Committee met and received presentations on deliverables and reviewed policy changes and updates. The Committee reviewed Policy No. 1900, Parent and Engagement; Policy No. 4320, Arts Education Policy; and Policy No. 5153, Parent Preference/Managed Choice. The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for July 16th.

Board Governance Committee

Chair Melisza Campos: The Board Governance Committee met on June 11th to discuss the Board’s governing Bylaws Policy, and the proposed Board meeting calendar for 2015-16. The Board’s existing bylaws, Board Bylaws Policy No. 2300, were amended in July 28, 2011 pursuant to Resolution No. 2011-12: 102. The Board has expressed an interest in revisiting this policy in effort to better align our governance structure and strategies. In discussing the Bylaws Policy at past meetings, the Committee reviewed the existing policy in comparison to those of school boards throughout New York to identify areas of opportunity. The Committee also reviewed proposed changes to the policy prepared by the Board’s staff. The Committee recommends that the proposed policy changes be forwarded to the Policy Committee for further vetting.

The Committee reviewed a proposed Board Meeting Calendar for the 2015-16 fiscal year (the calendar has been distributed to members of the Board). The Committee requests that the Board accept the meeting calendar. Commissioner Campos made a motion to accept the meeting calendar for the 2015-16 fiscal year; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Cruz. Motion carries 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Thursday, July 16th at 5:30 p.m.

VIII. Resolutions

Motion to separate Resolution No. 2014-15: 689 into Resolution No. 2014-15: 689 and Resolution No. 2014-15: 689a made by Vice President Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Powell. Motion carries 7-0.

2014-15: 689: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

2014-15: 689a: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2014-15: 690-696: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0.

2014-15: 697: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2014-15: 698: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0.

2014-15: 699-703: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0.

2014-15: 704-705: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Powell. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

No requests submitted for Resolution No. 691-695, 700, 703, and 706-710

2014-15: 711-712: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2014-15: 713: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 5-1 with President White abstaining due to familial relationship and Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2014-15: 714-715: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2014-15: 716: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 7-0.

2014-15: 717-729: Motion to adopt was made by Vice President Elliott. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0.

2014-15: 730-739: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Powell. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. Adopted 7-0.

Motion to postpone Resolution No. 2014-15: 740 was made by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 7-0.

2014-15: 741-744: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0.

Motion to postpone Resolution No. 2014-15: 745 was made by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 5-2 with Commissioner Campos and Commissioner Cruz dissenting.

2014-15: 746-747: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Powell. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2014-15: 748-749: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Powell. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. Adopted 7-0.

IX. Unfinished Business: None.

X. New Business: None.

Motion to enter into executive session to discuss matters related to the employment of a specific individual made by Commissioner Evans at 9:21 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Motion carries 7-0.

Motion to enter into open session made by Commissioner Powell at 10:17 p.m. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Motion carries 7-0.

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Powell at 10:20 p.m. Motion carries 7-0.