

Rochester Board of Education
Business Meeting September 21, 2006
6:30 p.m.

MINUTES

Attendance

President Garcia, Vice President Evans; Commissioners Brennan, Henley, and Powell; Student Representative Maurice Evans. Commissioner Thompson arrived at 6:33 p.m.

President Garcia called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Commissioner Brennan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Discussion

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to accept minutes of August 17, August 23 and August 31, 2006. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 7-0.

Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item

None

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Rivera reported a very smooth opening of the 2006-07 school year and attributed much of it to the new Chancery student information system. The Transportation Department received 3,800 calls the first week of school and 2,000 of them were handled on the spot. More than 1,900 students registered and were immediately placed. Every student has been issued his/her own textbook in core areas. A textbook hotline number is being provided to parents to report issues. Dr. Rivera cited recent results of NYS exams with gains in English Language Arts, Social Studies and Science. More work remains to be done at the high school level. He also discussed the transition of some secondary students to a later start time and transportation by RTS bus. Volunteers from Central Office who rode the RTS buses the first day of school were recognized in the audience.

President Garcia introduced Student Representative Maurice Evans and then asked for questions regarding Dr. Rivera's report.

Commissioner Elliott asked if the emphasis on test scores is leading to teachers teaching to the test and fudging numbers. Dr. Rivera said the District works very carefully with teachers so that they don't teach strictly to the test but so students understand the content of tests and are familiar with basic test-taking skills.

Commissioner Elliott asked if monitoring mechanisms are in place in the classroom and at test time. Dr. Rivera said Principals supervise their staffs and proctors monitor tests.

Commissioner Brennan asked if there are consequences for fudging or cheating. Dr. Rivera said there are serious consequences, including dismissal for a staff member and that scores may not be accepted by NYS.

Commissioner Henley commented that NYS is demanding too much in terms of testing.

Commissioner Evans asked if more schools will be participating in the later start time next year. Dr. Rivera said it is under discussion and schools will be involved in the decision-making process.

Student Representative Report

Maurice Evans discussed the Student Leadership Congress and its programs, including a Big Brothers/Big Sisters-type mentoring program, bullying prevention initiatives, and anti-violence public service announcements created by students to be shown on Students First. The SLC hopes to recruit more members and be more involved in the community this year. Commissioner Powell asked about advisors, and Mr. Evans introduced Tom Petronio and Barbara Jarzyniecki from the audience. In response to Commissioner Thompson, Mr. Evans said there were five students at the last meeting and they are working on recruiting more.

Committee Reports

Quality Assurance, written report submitted

Commissioner Thompson discussed the Human Resources/Culture Change report that was recommended by Quality Assurance and approved by the Board in December 2005. She asked for a motion that the report again receive support from the Board. Commissioner Evans made the motion and Commissioner Thompson seconded it. During discussion, Dr. Rivera said he would review the questions with his staff and Board staff and develop a plan for providing the answers. Commissioner Elliott said the importance of the diversity issue made the delay in reporting unacceptable. Dr. Rivera said implementation of aspects of the report is already underway. It has not been ignored. Commissioner Thompson reiterated that some information has been reported on but there is a need for a status check and that this is the plan she hears being put forward by the Superintendent. Commissioner Powell raised a procedural issue; the information was not presented 48 hours in advance of the Board meeting. President Garcia agreed that there is a procedural issue; the directive should be re-sent to the Superintendent from QA, then if there is no action it should come back to the full Board. Commissioner Thompson agreed to re-send the request in writing from the Committee and asked Commissioner Evans to withdraw his motion, which he did. Commissioner Thompson then brought up a proposed Community Forum on Graduation that she is working on with Commissioner Evans, Chair of Community and Intergovernmental Relations. She asked for a motion of support. Motion by Commissioner Evans, second by Commissioner Brennan. Commissioner Elliott said she did not move the item out of the Committee because she had concerns that the community would be blamed for the graduation rate. Commissioner Evans said he views the forum as a learning experience for the District and as collaborative in nature.

Roll call vote on motion of support:

- Student Rep: Yes
- Commissioner Thompson: Yes
- Commissioner Powell: Yes
- Commissioner Evans: Yes
- Commissioner Henley: Yes
- Commissioner Elliott: Yes
- Commissioner Brennan: Yes
- President Garcia: Yes

Commissioner Thompson then discussed JROTC and said the committee has asked administration to fast-track the evaluation; Dr. Rivera said he can provide the information by March 2007.

Finance, written report submitted

The committee met Sept. 14; it reviewed and recommends resolutions 228-31 and 246. Chairwoman Powell reported the Chief Information Officer Ford Green will provide information on the annual cost of Chancery; he will also set up another technology breakfast for Board members.

Community & Intergovernmental Relations, written report submitted

Chairman Evans provided dates for the public information sessions on the Facilities Modernization Program and asked that Committee meetings not be held on those dates. The meetings are October 16, 23 and 30. He noted that the Legislative Agenda will be discussed under New Business.

Audit

Chairman Evans said the Audit Committee met in Executive session. The committee is recommending Resolution 257, a contract with an attorney exclusively for the Board.

Governance

Chairman Henley said the next Governance Committee meeting is September 26.

Policy

Chairman Brennan said the date of the next Policy Committee meeting will be determined.

Consideration of Resolutions

President Garcia asked for a motion to approve resolutions 171 through 223, Human Resources. Motion by Commissioner Powell, second by Commissioner Henley. Commissioner Elliott said she had just received her Board packet and would have a lot of questions. President Garcia said the motion was approved and seconded, asked for discussion and called the vote: Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott abstaining except for 191 and 194, which were approved 5-0 with President Garcia abstaining because of familial relationships. Commissioner Elliott commented for the record that she did not abstain; she did not vote.

President Garcia called for a motion to approve Resolutions 224-227. Commissioner Elliott called for a motion to remove President Garcia. President Garcia called the motion out of order. Commissioner Powell motioned Resolutions 224-227; second by Commissioner Evans.

Roll call vote

- Commissioner Brennan: Yes
- Commissioner Thompson: Yes
- Commissioner Powell: Yes
- Commissioner Evans: Yes
- Commissioner Henley: Yes
- Commissioner Elliott: Yes
- President Garcia: Yes

Dr. Rivera then recognized several people in the audience who had been officially approved in the HR resolutions. President Garcia recognized Mr. Van White, who is expected to join the Board in January because he is unopposed in the November election.

President Garcia called for a motion on resolutions 228-231. Motion by Commissioner Evans, second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

President Garcia called for a motion on resolutions 232-234. Motion by Commissioner Henley, second by Commissioner Brennan, adopted 7-0.

President Garcia called for a motion on resolutions 235-257. Commissioner Evans asked for a motion to suspend the 48-hour rule for Resolution 257. Motion to suspend the 48-hour rule by Commissioner Henley,

second by Commissioner Brennan, adopted 7-0. Motion to approve resolutions 235-257 by Commissioner Powell, second by Commissioner Evans. Commissioner Elliott asked about the definition of disaster regarding Resolution 239. Chief Counsel Michael Looby said state and federal definitions are used. Commissioner Elliott asked Dr. Rivera about emergency evacuation plans and he said they are in place. Commissioner Elliott also commented about the dollar amount included in contracts for the Center for Youth Services. She asked about the MWBE component in Resolution 246 and Dr. Rivera said he would get back to her with the specifics. Commissioner Powell said she applauded Commissioner Elliott's ability to speed-read through this section of resolutions. Commissioner Elliott said no response was necessary. Motions 235-257 adopted 7-0 except for: Resolution 239, adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Thompson abstaining; Resolution 251, adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott abstaining; and resolutions 241-50, 252-254, and 256, adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott abstaining.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

Commissioner Elliott asked for a motion that the Auditor General look into Resolutions 242-45; President Garcia called the motion out of order. He explained that the request would have to go to the Audit Committee through the Auditor General. Commissioner Elliott said she would make the request.

Proposed Legislative Agenda (attached)

President Garcia said he objected to Item 7, putting employees in the Superintendent's Employee Group under civil service. Commissioner Evans said the Legislative Agenda would be brought forward at the October Business Meeting for a vote.

Commissioners then had a round-table discussion regarding communication. President Garcia called on each Commissioner individually. Commissioner Elliott said she does not think anecdotal criticism is necessary. Commissioner Thompson said Commissioners should judge themselves by their intentions and others by their actions; don't make assumptions. Commissioner Powell said it is clear what is intended when aspersions are cast and that those aspersions land on Board committees, not the District. Commissioner Evans said he is too busy working to improve lives to get involved personally. Commissioner Henley said he applauds diverse voices. Commissioner Brennan said civility is a two-way street and he hopes everyone has an understanding of humanity and good intentions.

Speakers on other than Agenda Items

James Simmons: Discussed the lack of African American football coaches in Section V.

Minister James Muhammed: Read from Bill of Rights; he said the concerns of the community must be taken seriously because it is a long, long history being dealt with.

Ron Ring: Discussed the importance of spiritual love, peace education, daycare, healthcare, protecting the environment, rational reason, terrorist activity, constructive dissent, and peaceful evolution.

Reverend Willie Harvey: Discussed problems in the District; spending money but not having children in mind; Commissioners should do the job they were elected to do and stop arguing among themselves; warned against people putting their own agendas forward rather than the good of the District.

Reverend Raymond Graves: Discussed concerns about the education of children and staff, racism, too many African American educators thrown out in the middle of their careers; referenced Prince Edward County in Virginia and Dr. Herman Frank.

Howard Eagle: Said racism is alive and well in RCSD; Frederick Douglass pulled his daughter out of city schools because of racism and the same issue is being fought today. He called for a Department of African American Studies and Affairs similar to the Bilingual Education Program.

Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Evans, second by Commissioner Henley. Adopted at 8:05 p.m.