

Rochester Board of Education Business Meeting
March 15, 2007
Minutes

The Board conducted its annual Women's History Month celebration, recognizing students, prior to the Business Meeting.

Attendance:

President Garcia, Commissioners Brennan, Elliott, Powell, Thompson and White. Vice President Evans arrived at 6:40 p.m.

President Garcia convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. and congratulated all of the young women on their accomplishments.

- I) Commissioner Elliott led the Act of Reverence and Pledge of Allegiance.
- II) Motion to approve minutes of February 15, February 19 and March 1 by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Powell. Commissioner Elliott stated that minutes should reflect who said what, with the names of commissioners attached to their statements. The names of committee chairs should be included with the name of the committee. All minutes need to be more specific and explicit. In reference to the CIGR Meeting of the Whole Minutes of February 19, she said she wanted it stated for the record that she favors the new regulations proposed by the governor tied to funding only in the sense that if Commissioners are not doing their jobs as School Board members, they need to go. President Garcia said Commissioner Elliott should state what she said in that meeting that she would like corrected in the minutes. Commissioner Elliott said the Clerk should check the tape. The Clerk stated that the meeting was not taped. Commissioner Elliott said her statement had been that she is in favor of the regulations the Governor is proposing in the sense of if not doing the job as superintendent of schools or commissioner of schools, she does not have a problem with the Governor making these kinds of decisions for the benefit of our children. Commissioner Brennan said he wanted to respond to Commissioner Elliott's statements. President Garcia clarified that all the Board was doing was correcting minutes. Commissioner Elliott said she had another correction, that she also supports two additional mayoral appointments to the Board because education is an important issue to the community. Commissioner Brennan wanted to discuss the minutes because of Commissioner Elliott's statements. President Garcia said they would vote on the minutes with the stated corrections, then he would provide time for Commissioner Brennan to speak because Commissioner Elliott's statements had gone beyond corrections. Commissioner Brennan said it is absurd to say that the School Board position is so important that the people should not be allowed to say who serves on the Board -- if Commissioners are not doing their jobs, the public should address it. President Garcia called the vote. Commissioner Elliott said she wanted to discuss formatting of the minutes. President Garcia said the discussion was for corrections only. Commissioner Elliott said Board Governance would take up the issue. President Garcia restated the corrections at Commissioner Brennan's request. Commissioner Brennan said the Board should not be correcting minutes after the fact with one side of an argument represented. President Garcia agreed and asked all commissioners to refrain from doing so. Minutes adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Brennan dissenting.
- III) No speakers addressing Agenda items.

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- IV) Dr. Rivera reported on the success of the FIRST Robotics teams and said he will present his recommended budget to the Board next week. He and RTA President Adam Urbanski then recognized teachers who had earned National Board Certification. With 33 National Board Certified teachers, the RCSD now has more than all of the 18 Monroe County suburban districts combined. It also has significantly more than Buffalo, Syracuse or Yonkers, the other Big Four Districts. Commissioner Elliott asked about schools being closed and Ebonics being taught in schools. Dr. Rivera said Frederick Douglass is not being closed; it is being restructured and that information will be provided as part of his recommended budget. Chief of Diversity and Leadership Development Michele Hancock addressed the Ebonics/Black English Vernacular (BEV) question and said that teachers are urged to recognize that some African American students have a home/street language and to respect it, use it as a tool to teach standard English. President Garcia asked that Commissioners address their questions to the Chair. Commissioner Elliott asked if there had been a public outcry on this issue and Ms. Hancock said there had not been a negative response from the community. Commissioner White said he would appreciate greater in-depth discussion on the topic, perhaps to the QA committee. President Garcia made the request.

V) Committee Reports

Student Representative

Maurice Evans reported that the Student Leadership Congress is filming an anti-bullying public service announcement. The Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentees are included in the project. The SLC plans a bowling night with younger colleagues in April. They will also discuss the Student Code of Conduct and submit recommendations for changes for the 2997-08 Code of Conduct.

Board Governance

Chair Cynthia Elliott discussed the successful math exam tutor recruiting effort of Arkee Allen and said it shows the community is concerned with how children are being educated. She attended March 9 and said students appreciated all adults who came out and wanted to work with them. She also said it would be good to see the resulting test scores. Board Governance met February 26 and discussed the Board Retreat set for March 31. The committee also forwarded the discussion of the Board Bylaws amendment to the Policy Committee. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 26, 2007 at 6:30 p.m.

Finance

Chair Willa Powell said Finance met March 8 to review the February 2007 Financial Reports and resolutions 596 through 612 and resolution 614. The Committee sought a motion to accept the financial reports and recommended resolutions 596-612. The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 17 at 5:30pm. This regularly scheduled meeting will be followed by a Finance Committee of the Whole meeting to review the first section of the Budget Book. Commissioner Elliott asked about the Medicaid line; Commissioner Powell said she could provide additional information after the meeting. Motion to approve the financial reports by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner White. Adopted 7-0.

Quality Assurance

Chair Shirley Thompson said QA met March 5 and discussed:

- An update on the Human Resources/Culture Change/Diversity Initiative
- Changes we understand have been made to the "Living Contract" with RTA and ASAR
- A report on the status of Gay Straight Alliance groups and other alternative groups
- The African and African American Studies Department proposed by Commissioner White and the administration

At the meeting, Michele Hancock, Chief of Diversity and Leadership Development, discussed progress on the Human Resources/Culture Change/Diversity Initiative. Diversity and inclusion are embedded in the

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new Strategic Planning Framework adopted by the Board of Education in February. At the building and district level, there is a greater emphasis on diversity and inclusion. Diversity training is provided on a regular basis in order to increase teacher engagement in examining the influence of race, ethnicity, language, etc. Principals are actively engaging diversity vendors. Human Resources and Ms. Hancock's department created a Diversity Action Hiring Plan. Quality Assurance had several follow-up questions and this is an issue we will continue to monitor on behalf of the Board. We all agreed that there is more work to be done. As Chair of QA, Commissioner Thompson copied all Board members on memos to the Superintendent regarding changes in the professional development components of the Living Contract with ASAR and RTA. When we receive this information, we will share it with the full Board. QA is monitoring the status of GSA groups and other organizations supporting alternative lifestyles to ensure that these groups are being supported on an equal basis with other student organizations. This is an ongoing discussion and we anticipate having more information to share after the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) tabulates an electronic survey to students and staff in our secondary schools this spring. It is clear from a telephone survey in December 2006 that homophobia is a serious issue for our students, regardless of orientation. Commissioner White's resolution in February to establish a Department of African and African American Studies received widespread support from the Board. As the superintendent reported, there is funding in the 2007-08 budget for this department and Ms. Hancock is making progress establishing it. She reported that the emphasis will be on real K-12 curriculum changes and instructional delivery. The changes will not conflict with but will embrace the New York State Standards and promote a different way of teaching. This Afro-Centric approach will meet the needs of all students, including Hispanic students and other students of color, because it is more inclusionary than the current Euro-Centric approach. Next steps include continued data gathering, creating a stakeholder committee and hiring a director for the department. Ms. Hancock is working with Board staff on this initiative and will provide a preliminary timeline for the initiative at the April 16 QA meeting. Because of the April vacation, QA's next meeting is Monday, April 16.

Audit Committee

Chair Van White said Audit will review Stage III grievances as they relate to risk management. Audit met March 12 in executive session to discuss the Deloitte and Touche contract and seeks a motion to accept Deloitte & Touche as the CAFR Auditor for the 2006-07 year for a fee of \$70,325. He said this is the last year of a five-year intermunicipal agreement in conjunction with the City of Rochester. The next Audit Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 4 at 6:30 p.m. Motion to accept D&T as CAFR auditor and fee by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Adopted 7-0. President Garcia said Audit should discuss the Stage III grievance issues with administration in order to become educated on the issue and understand the union contract issues.

Policy Committee

Chair Thomas Brennan said Policy met on February 27 to review and discuss the Local Wellness Policy, the Board Bylaws and the Proposed Personnel Committee. The Committee received information gathered by the Administration regarding lead-safe initiatives, including a brief overview of the District's current lead abatement efforts and two proposals detailing how the District will address abatement in the future. The Committee will further discuss the District's lead abatement efforts and initiatives at the next meeting. The Committee also discussed amending the Board Bylaws (Policy No. 2300) to change the Board Business Meeting date from the third Thursday of each month to the fourth Thursday of each month. This amendment would allow for more time to consider Board resolutions and financial reports as well as allow for the Division of Financial Services to better perform month end closings. The Committee has advanced this amendment as an information item, and asks that it be discussed at this meeting and be voted on at the April Business Meeting. The Committee referred the review of the proposed Personnel Committee to the Board Governance Committee for further discussion.

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Superintendent Search Committee

Chair Malik Evans said the Committee met March 12 to discuss the next steps of the search process, including the position posting and interim candidate interviews. The Committee has made press releases along with the survey summary available to the community on the District's website. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 19 at 5:15 p.m.

Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

Chair Malik Evans said Community and Intergovernmental Relations met as a Committee of the Whole on February 19 and March 1. On February 19, Rick Hannon presented a detailed analysis of the governor's budget proposal, focusing on the financial, accountability and governance implications. At the meeting March 1, the committee directed Board staff to draft a letter to legislators on this proposal; it is ready and will be sent when there are firm budget numbers.

V) Resolutions

President Garcia asked that Resolution 2006-07: 588 be pulled because it refers to training that will not take place because of an emergency closing make-up day. Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Commissioner Thompson questioned the various dates and how they related to the make up date. President Garcia said the resolution would be corrected and brought back for consideration. Adopted 7-0.

2006-07: 570-595, excluding 588: Motion to adopt by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Voice vote approval. Commissioner Elliott voted No on 570, 571, 573 and had a question on 585. Her counter-motion was called Out of Order by President Garcia. Commissioner Elliott said she wanted to discuss 585. President Garcia said the resolutions had already been approved and her no votes were now being recorded. She said the voting is too rushed. President Garcia reminded the Board that personnel resolutions are not discussed at the meeting; details must be discussed in Executive Session. President Garcia said the Board could not move to Executive Session because the resolutions had already passed. She asked for a legal opinion. President Garcia reiterated that the resolutions had already been approved and suggested the Board move on unless Commissioner Elliott had something else to say. Commissioner Elliott said it was a poor way of doing business; Commissioner Brennan agreed. President Garcia called Commissioner Brennan Out of Order. Commissioner White asked for clarification as to whether 585 included a negotiated and executed instrument or whether it would come back to the Board for final approval. President Garcia said it would be negotiated and executed by the Board President. Commissioner Elliott said the process was too rushed. President Garcia called her Out of Order. He said he would provide time for her questions and comments during "New Business." Commissioners Thompson and Brennan said they had not cast their votes yet. President Garcia said Commissioners would vote one at a time and began with Commissioner White. Commissioner Brennan said it is not the President's role to stifle debate. President Garcia called him Out of Order.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner White: No

Commissioner Thompson: Yes on 580, 581, 583, 586, 587, 589, 590, 593-95 with comment.

President Garcia said comments are only used to explain votes and the conversation had gone beyond what is reasonable and normal. Commissioner Thompson said she wanted to explain her votes. Commissioner Brennan asked who decided. President Garcia said it is up to the Chair. Commissioner Brennan made a motion to vacate the chair. President Garcia called him Out of Order. Commissioner Thompson said she would not vote yes on any resolution that included the wording "on the recommendation of the superintendent" because she is not confident the superintendent has been fully present, accessible or engaged and she could not vote in good faith.

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Commissioner Powell: Yes to all
Commissioner Evans: Yes to all
Commissioner Brennan: No to all
Commissioner Elliott: No to all
President Garcia: Yes to all

President Garcia said the no votes prevailed and resolutions would either be brought back or discussed in executive session. Commissioner Evans made a motion to move into executive session to reconsider the previous vote. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted at 7:40 p.m.

Motion to reconvene in open session by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted at 8:20 p.m. The Board reconvened at the dais at 8:22 p.m.

Motion by Vice President Evans to reconsider Resolutions 2006-07: 570-595 excluding 588. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 7-0.

President Garcia called for a roll call vote on Resolutions 2006-07: 570-595 excluding 588:

Commissioner White: Yes
Commissioner Thompson: Yes to 580, 581, 583, 586, 587, 589, 590, 593-95
Commissioner Powell: Yes
Commissioner Evans: Yes
Commissioner Brennan: Yes
Commissioner Elliott: No to 570, 571, 573, 585, 589, 590, 591.
President Garcia: Yes
Resolutions Adopted.

Commissioner Powell motioned for a roll call vote on remaining resolutions. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0.

Commissioner Thompson motioned for the Board to extend the meeting beyond 8:30 p.m. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

Resolutions 2006-07: 596-610: Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell.

Commissioner White: Yes
Commissioner Thompson: Yes to 596-601, 604-606
Commissioner Powell: Yes
Commissioner Evans: Yes
Commissioner Brennan: Yes
Commissioner Elliott: No to 610
President Garcia: Yes
Resolutions Adopted.

Resolutions 2006-07: 611-612: Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner White.

Commissioner White: Yes
Commissioner Thompson: No
Commissioner Powell: Yes
Commissioner Evans: Yes
Commissioner Brennan: Yes
Commissioner Elliott: Yes
President Garcia: Yes

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Resolutions Adopted.

Resolutions 2006-07: 613-614: Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell.

Commissioner White: Yes
Commissioner Thompson: No
Commissioner Powell: Yes
Commissioner Evans: Yes
Commissioner Brennan: Yes
Commissioner Elliott: No to 614
President Garcia: Yes

Resolutions Adopted.

Resolutions 2006-07: 615-625: Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner White.

Commissioner White: Yes
Commissioner Thompson: Yes to 621-625
Commissioner Powell: Yes
Commissioner Evans: Yes
Commissioner Brennan: Yes
Commissioner Elliott: No to 619
President Garcia: Yes

Resolutions Adopted.

VII) No unfinished business.

VIII) New Business

Commissioners discussed the recommendation from Policy to amend the Board Bylaws so that the monthly Business Meeting will be held on the fourth Thursday of the month instead of the third Thursday. Commissioner Powell said the Board packets will be delivered two Fridays before the Business Meeting, providing additional time for Commissioners to prepare. It will also allow for the Division of Financial Services to better perform month end closings. Commissioner Evans said the amendment should state explicitly that the information packet/financial reports will be delivered two Fridays before the Business Meeting.

Commissioners also discussed amending the Board Bylaws to add the Audit Committee to the list of Standing Committees. The Committee was created early in 2006; the bylaws were not changed at that time.

IX) Three speakers addressed the Board on the topics of parent/teacher interactions, community involvement, and transportation issues.

X) Motion to adjourn to Executive Session for negotiations by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0 at 8:50 p.m. Motion to adjourn following executive session by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent at 9:25 p.m.