

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Special Meeting

April 28, 2020

MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCING

Board Members in Attendance: President Van Henri White, Vice President Cynthia Elliott, Commissioner Ricardo Adams, Commissioner Beatriz LeBron via Zoom Videoconferencing. Commissioner Amy Maloy, Commissioner Willa Powell, and Commissioner Natalie Sheppard

Administration and Board Officers in Attendance: Deputy Superintendent Lynda Quick, and other Cabinet members, Chief Counsel Karl Kristoff and District Clerk Marisol O. Ramos-Lopez.

- I. **Call to Order:** President White called the meeting to order at 5:42 p.m.

At 5:43 p.m., Commissioner Maloy moved to **enter into Executive Session** to discuss a matter related to a personnel matter. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Motion carries 7-0.

At 5:56 p.m., Vice President Elliott moved to **exit Executive Session**. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 7-0.

Meeting reconvened at 5:59 p.m.

Consideration of **Resolution No. 2019-20: 876** made by Member of the Board Commissioner LeBron. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Maloy dissenting.

- II. **Speakers:** *Due to the closure of meetings to the Public because of COVID-19, one speaker addressed the Board for two minutes via Zoom.*

Susan Houghton addressed the board regarding social emotional learning.

- III. **Special Meeting Discussion Items:**

2020-21 Budget Update Presentation

Deputy Superintendent Lynda Quick and CFO Robert Franklin presented 20-21 Amended Budget Proposal. They provided an update on the current status; the East EPO reductions; Central Office reductions; Rochester International Academy changes; Pre-K Center changes and restorations; School Safety; changes in the Law Department; changes in African American Studies; JROTC Program Restoration; Instructional Coaches; Social Workers; Specialized Services Department; Transportation and Facilities; School Closures/Transitions; and a summary of changes from the draft budget.

East EPO 2020-21 Budget Update Presentation

Superintendent Shaun Nelms presented on the 20% reductions that the East EPO are proposing for the 2020-21 Fiscal Year.

Vice President Elliott expressed her concerns regarding RIA and the issues the State has brought up about the school and asked for clarity on how the District has managed the situation. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that they were trying to work with the State in maintaining the school as a 1-12 grade school and the State said no. She indicated that the State was going to send a letter specifically identifying their concerns.

Vice President Elliott asked about the UPK/EPK issue and wanted to know what the rationale for changing the formula for the number of seats regarding the students that would be served by the District or a pre-K provider. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that they reviewed the formula and the community's ask to keep Community Based Organizations as Pre-K service providers.

Commissioner Sheppard noted her concerns regarding the Community Based Organizations who were receiving seats back would not have sufficient time to plan for more students, since they were told that they would be losing seats. She expects that the CBOs that are impacted will be contacted and a report to the Board will be made. She also spoke about the closing of schools #44 and #57 and she asked if the anticipated savings were still expected. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that the savings would still be achieved. She inquired about the \$35 million in spin up aid and when the payments for that loan have to be made. CFO Franklin indicated that the spin up aid was for the 2019-20 school year. She wanted to be clear in the messaging of what the state has act

Commissioner Adams spoke in reference to the Pre-K slots and asked that the administration follow the chart that was provided with the rankings and that the ones that have the highest rating receive the majority of the seats to ensure children get the greatest possible service. He also asked several questions regarding the section of the budget relating to raises for BEG and SEG staff. CFO Franklin indicated that there are no raises planned for staff in these groups. He asked about furloughs and whether the district will move in that direction. He wants the administration to consider furloughs for staff.

President White expressed concerns regarding some positions that would need to be discussed during executive session.

Commissioner Sheppard asked about #3 School and the planned reconfiguration. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that the school will be renamed to Nathaniel Rochester Middle School for grades 7 and 8 and have a new BEDS code.

Vice President Elliott asked if the district was leasing any other buildings aside from Hart Street. And should the district be thinking about returning programs to RCSD buildings and getting out of leases. Deputy Superintendent Quick said they were looking into that issue and will get back to the board. She asked Dr. Nelms about the programs and services that they were looking at reducing this year. He indicated that they have not contacted all of the program providers and

did not want to announce the cuts during this board meeting. He will provide a listing to the board when the communication with the agencies is made.

Commissioner Adams inquired as to whether parents have been advised of the new bell times. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that the notification is forthcoming. He also commented regarding professional development for SSO's.

Commissioner LeBron acknowledged the teacher that spoke regarding the closure of School #43 and expressed concern over the notification process for that. Commissioner LeBron had technical difficulties and temporarily left the meeting.

Commissioner Sheppard asked about Social Workers and wants more information about the partnership with the Catholic Family Center and the supports they are going to provide to the district. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated they are workers that support the supplemental supports for individual students and will follow up with Commissioner Sheppard to provide detail on how outside agency Social Workers will be utilized to provide that support. Commissioner Sheppard requested that they also include the ratios for all Social Worker to student services.

Vice President Elliott inquired about RIA and whether the school can be modified to be a 1st-12th grade, and asked that Deputy Superintendent Quick reach out to the Principal to discuss the options to make this a reality. President White indicated that he spoke to Chancellor Rosa and she explained in detail that the school could not continue to operate in the same manner because it is a transition school and the manner in which it is being run violates State policy. Chancellor Rosa committed to sending the Board the letters from the State that explain the policy violations.

Commissioner LeBron returned to the zoom meeting. She addressed the RIA issue and expressed being surprised about the issues related to the communication from the State. She also inquired the central office reductions in the budget and whether those include Human Resources and the Law Department and whether the reductions and salary freezes included these two departments. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that the staff that are in the SEG and BEG employment groups will be included and that they will also look at the exempt employee group for salary freezes. Commissioner LeBron then asked about the seats being returned to the Pre-K/UPK providers and whether communication had been established with the organizations. She inquired as to whether a new resolution had to be developed to replace the resolution that had been voted on.

Commissioner Maloy asked for more detail on the 14 instructional coaches that were reduced to seven at Central Office that are part of the budget. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that those are grant funded teaching positions that will work side by side with principals/teachers at schools to implement the next generation learning standards. Commissioner Maloy expressed concern over the reduction and the support being provided to teachers. Deputy Superintendent Quick assured that the quality of the programming would not be impacted. Pierson, the consultant working on next generation learning, has been very supportive in ensuring that technical assistance is provided to all schools in the program.

Commissioner Maloy asked Superintendent Nelms to provide detail on the reduction of administrators at East. Superintendent Nelms will provide the information through the question log.

Commissioner Sheppard inquired about the status of placement and how the closure of programs and schools are being considered through the placement process, and whether times for school choice are being extended. Chief of Staff Lehner affirmed that the times for school choice are being extended and communication has already gone out to all impacted families.

Commissioner LeBron asked about the implementation process for the K-5 reading program that the board approved last year. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that when the program was originally approved there was a significantly higher level of support available prior to the budget issues. The State expected that the district have a roll-out model for implementation and will share it with Board Members. Commissioner LeBron expressed concern regarding the State Mandate and the lack of funding that exists for the program. She addressed the East EPO budget request she made and asked that they provide detail prior to next Thursday's meeting.

Vice President Elliot asked about the plan for budget development post Covid-19. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated that they are awaiting to hear back from the Governor on what the reopening directives will be. She said that the district is working on supporting more digital content and hope that they are able to incorporate that into the reopening plan and what the costs associated with that will be. CFO Franklin addressed the issue of budget development and finances and indicated that they are still working with the Transportation providers and negotiating a reduction in their contracts to achieve some savings for the district. He reminded the Board that these are 90% reimbursable expenses, and as the district saves dollars, so does the State. The district is also experiencing reduced substitute teacher costs; and as his team works better to quantify the dollars, he believes there will be a small fund balanced that should be assigned to next year's increased costs. He expressed concern over the request from NYSED's request for a contingency plan should the State request a 5% "claw-back" dollars of State aid totaling upwards of \$25 million. He recommends that the board prepare itself for a hard fight with New York State for additional funding or better protection of school districts. He discussed the Revenue Anticipation Note that will come before the board for authorization and then to the City of Rochester. He indicated that it would be substantial.

Commissioner Sheppard indicated that the board should be prepared to take legal action against the State if the "claw-back" from the state is initiated to protect the funding for schools and students.

Commissioner Maloy discussed the issue of ratios in schools for social workers and counselors and what the district is doing to be more equitable across the district and consistent throughout. Deputy Superintendent Quick indicated they will provide additional details on the ratios for counselors and social workers.

Vice President Elliott asked about the SRO deployment strategy and COO Mike Schmidt will provide the board with a listing of the proposed plan.

Commissioner LeBron discussed the potential “claw-backs” from the State and indicated that she fully supports the \$8 million for the fund balance. She asked for the cost analysis for the savings that the administration was to present to the Board outlining the savings actualized due to the closure of schools. She discussed the \$10 million Cash Capital funding that the district has been using the last two fiscal years for the deficit and shared her concerns about future planning when the funds have to be reverted for Cash Capital usage.

Commissioner LeBron handed the gavel back to President White and concluded the Budget Discussion.

The meeting was moved into **Executive Session** at 7:52 pm by Commissioner LeBron. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion passes 7-0.

The meeting was moved into **Executive Session** at 9:46 pm by Commissioner LeBron. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion passes 7-0.

Commissioner Maloy moved to **adjourn** the meeting at 9:47 pm. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion passes 7-0.

IV. New Business – None

V. Motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:52 p.m. to discuss the appointment of a specific individual and have a confidential conversation with Counsel seeking legal advice made by Commissioner LeBron. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 7-0.

Motion to exit Executive Session at 9:46 p.m. made by Commissioner LeBron. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 7-0.

VI. Motion to adjourn at 9:47 p.m. made by Commissioner Maloy. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 7-0.