

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, January 19, 2023

The meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held in person on Thursday, January 19, 2023 at Mt. Hope High School in the Cafeteria located at 199 Chestnut Street, Bristol, RI 02809.

Present: Nicky Piper, Chairperson; Adam McGovern, Vice Chairperson; Jessica Almeida, Treasurer; Tara Thibaudeau, Secretary; Carly Reich, and Sarah Bullard; Ana Riley, Superintendent of Schools; Frank Caliri, Facilities Director

Local Representatives: Aaron Ley, Bristol Town Council; Mary Parella, Bristol Town Council; Steven Contente, Bristol Town Administrator; Keri Cronin, Warren Town Council; Kate Michaud, Warren Town Manager

State Legislators: Representative Jason Knight; Senator Linda Ujifusa; Representative Susan Donovan; Representative June Speakman; Senator Walter Felag

I. OPEN SESSION

Chairperson Nicky Piper opened the meeting at approximately 8:34 AM.

II. LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Chairperson Piper opened the meeting by inviting the group to introduce themselves. After introductions, the group had the following discussion:

Review of Enabling Legislation:

Chairperson Piper noted that the Enabling Legislation does not include any requirement that it be reviewed at any time and feels that she'd like to see a review process/timeline added.

Representative Donovan stated that she thought that any changes to the Enabling Legislation will need to go before the voters in each Town.

Senator Felag added that changes have been discussed in the past, but that the request needs to come up through the Town Councils, through Town Council Resolutions.

Representative Speakman stated that she will look to see if the process is different to make a small change.

Senator Ujifusa stated that she will look into the proper procedure and send it to the School Committee.

Regional Bonus:

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Ms. Thibaudeau asked if there was any way to bring back the regional bonus.

Senator Felag explained that the Funding Formula, when it was created, found that Bristol Warren received about \$8m more that it should and so a reduction of about \$800K each year for 10 years was set up. Now that it's been several years, he thinks that it could be time to revisit the formula and update it.

Representative Donovan stated that the regional bonus was understood to be temporary. She doesn't think that it will ever come back.

Representative Knight stated that the Funding Formula was put in place to provide equity across the state without relying on property taxes. He stated that there is growing pressure to revisit it to see if anything needs to be changed.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if there is a way through adding CTE programs that funding could be available for them. Representative Knight explained that a district will have to come up with a unique CTE program that is not otherwise available to Bristol Warren students.

Senator Ujifusa stated that she will look at ways for the District to be heard through the review process.

Transportation Region:

Superintendent Riley explained that the District is in the East Bay, but that it is not included in the transportation regions with the rest of the East Bay towns. She added that this results in about a \$1.2m hit on the District's transportation budget.

Representative Knight requested that the District work with its lawyer to identify which law(s) need to be changed and he will look into it. He stated that this might be something that can be fixed for the District.

Representative Donovan stated that there are several communities that don't like the way the Transportation Regions are set up. She supports a review of the relevant laws.

Chairperson Piper asked if there were any issues that the legislators would like to discuss.

Representative Knight advised that the District be cautious about the State funding, pointing out that the Governor's budget is not always the ending budget. He recommended paying attention to the budget process as it progresses through the State Legislature.

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Representative Speakman advised that this is a good time to build stuff because there is money for construction.

Superintendent Riley stated that the District is on track to put in its request on time, noting that there was an extension on the filing date from the SBA.

Senator Ujifusa stated that when the Funding Formula was created, some of the algorithms were a bit “mushy”. She stated that with a good argument, there might be some sway in how the Formula is set up.

Senator Felag asked if the District is kept up to date on Educational legislation as it progresses through the process. Superintendent Riley stated that she gets the list from RIDE and reviews it regularly.

Senator Ujifusa stated that she is opposed to charter schools, which she feels have an impact on funding.

Representative Speakman stated that she reads about the achievements of students and staff through the paper. She asked if there was a way that she and others could be kept updated so that she can facilitate appropriate acknowledgement from the State level. Superintendent Riley stated that she can share the School Committee Accolades with everyone.

Representative Knight stated that the governor cares a lot about education and he foresees good changes on the horizon.

Senator Felag mentioned that there will be a bill on the School Lunch program that is part of the basis that impacts the Funding Formula. He noted that it’s important to keep up enrollments in the Free & Reduced Lunch program.

Chairperson Piper asked the group how often the group should meet.

Response: twice a year - April/May and in the late Fall would be good times to meet. Representative Speakman stated that if a bill is complicated it could take time, so early Fall (not in an election year) would be a good time to initiate a discussion on an issue.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Piper thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 9:16 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Tara Thibaudeau, Secretary /dbc