

**Rochester Board of Education
Finance Committee
April 15, 2010
5:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioner Powell (Chair) and Commissioners White and Cruz. Parent Representative: Felix Jacobs. District Staff: Joyce Martelli, Jerome Underwood, Annmarie Lehner, Jeanette Silvers, Gary Smith, Tim Cliby, and Maria Mello Dupre.

Commissioner Powell convened the meeting at 5:36 p.m.

I. Review and Approve Minutes of March 18, 2010 Finance Committee Meeting and April 6, 2010 Finance Committee Meeting of the Whole

Motion by Commissioner White to approve the minutes of the March 18th and April 6th Finance Committee meetings. Commissioner Cruz inquired as to the possibility of including in the meeting minutes an excused absence due to a schedule conflict. Commissioner Powell replied that this could be accommodated, but that she would have to be notified in advance. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

II. Review and Discuss Board Goals Established for Finance Committee

Commissioner Powell explained that the Board formulated goals to correspond with the Strategic Plan, with each Committee assigned to attain specific objectives over 2010-11. She reported three objectives for the Finance Committee: 1) Identify and implement mechanisms to reduce operational costs; 2) Formulate policies to assist in improved resource allocation; and 3) Authorize a budget in accordance with fiscal oversight standards.

Commissioner White inquired as to how the Finance Committee is to address and attain these goals. Commissioner Powell responded that the Committee is currently addressing the goal of reviewing and authorizing a budget in compliance with fiscal oversight standards. She asserted that the Administration should take the lead in identifying ways to streamline operations and reduce these costs.

III. Process for Selecting Parent Representative to Finance Committee

Commissioner Powell referred to application materials for serving as a parent representative to the Finance Committee, noting that materials had not been received from the current parent representative. She asked Mr. Jacobs whether he would like to continue serving on the Finance Committee or wanted to switch to a different Board committee. Mr. Jacobs replied that he had spoken with the Chair of another committee, who is supposed to provide him with further information. Commissioner Powell encouraged Mr. Jacobs to submit his application if he wants to be considered for the Finance Committee for the upcoming fiscal year.

IV. Review and Receive March 2010 Financial Report

Commissioner Powell noted that the March 2010 Financial Report contains a few budget amendments due to receipt of new federal grants, and inquired whether these new grants are competitive. Joyce Martelli reported that some of these new grants are competitively awarded.

Ms. Martelli referred to the Available Funds section of the Report, indicating that the percentage of funds expended so far this year (70%) is almost the same for this time last year (73%). She explained that some specific line items have changed due to changes in grant funding.

Commissioner White asked whether there are concerns regarding receipt of the State Aid payment. Ms. Martelli emphasized that this is an ongoing concern under current economic conditions, citing an example of the State notifying RCSD on March 30th that the March 31st payment would not be provided. She explained that an advance payment had been provided in 2008-09 and the District's cash flow projections were not based on receipt of payment until June, which prevented the financial disruption encountered in other school districts. Ms. Martelli noted that New York's financial status has not improved and the effect on future cash flow at the State level is uncertain, but she has not heard that the June payment will be withheld or delayed. She stated that the District has been delaying payment to vendors for as long as possible without creating contractual or other problems. Ms. Martelli expressed concern about funding for this summer because of the delay in passing the State budget.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve the March 2010 Financial Report. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve the 2009-10 budget amendments. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

V. Review of Proposed Resolutions for April 29, 2010 Board Business Meeting

A. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY:

1. NCS Pearson, Inc. (Resolution No. 2009-10: 801)

Annmarie Lehner explained that this resolution is for two software products built onto the Chancery system: 1) Power Teaching, a grade book software which will enable collection of every assignment and project for grading to be loaded into Chancery; and 2) Parent Connect, which will provide information to parents as to their child's performance on assignments and projects. Ms. Lehner clarified that the resolution is for the cost of implementing the two modules already owned by RCSD. She stated that grading is not contained in any of the systems because it is currently performed manually.

Commissioner Powell clarified that DataCation includes standardized testing, but not homework assignments or projects. Ms. Silvers asserted that these two software components will facilitate the District's ability to respond to New York State regulations, which are moving toward combining grades, teachers, and regions for comparison, and provide analysis for teachers to focus on specific student needs.

Commissioner White questioned whether these functions could have been requested initially in the development of the Chancery system without having to add on new modules or components.

Commissioner Cruz contended that information technology has evolved with new mandates and data needs, emphasizing the importance of parents having greater access and interaction with information in the District.

Commissioner White asked about methods for ensuring that staff at the school level will utilize the system. Ms. Silvers replied that her staff are currently assigned to work with school-level staff to aid their understanding of data management and specific concerns from past performance, including over-reporting. Report cards will be created at the elementary level to gain an overview for all schools, which will also aid in monitoring to ensure accurate and complete data. Ms. Silvers also described collaboration with the Division of Youth & Family Services to ensure that parents are aware of this system and know how to use it. Ms. Lehner described a demonstration project with a team of parents, teachers, principals, and staff in Human Capital Initiatives to gather input from a variety of perspectives in developing specific features of the system. She stated that this team will also be involved in assisting with implementation of the new components.

Commissioner White questioned how this enhanced system differs from the Data Dashboard. Ms. Lehner clarified that the new components are specific to grading, assignments, and providing information to parents, whereas the Data Dashboard ties information together in one location. Ms. Lehner explained that the two software modules will be implemented in four three-month phases: 1) Chancery, some financial information, and HCI data; 2) analysis of assessments; 3) and 4) Data from various sources to tie into analytics for workforce performance and procurement.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve the agreement with NCS Pearson, Inc.. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

B. PROCUREMENT:

- 1. Athletic Uniforms (Resolution No. 2009-10: 784)**
- 2. Educational Software (Resolution No. 2009-10: 785)**
- 3. Lock & Door Closers (Resolution No. 2009-10: 786)**

Gary Smith explained that all of the above procurement resolutions are for extensions to existing contracts.

For athletic uniforms, Mr. Smith stated that the cost is discounted from catalog pricing, providing the best value for the quality.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve contract extension for Athletic Uniforms. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Tim Cliby noted that the cost for educational software for individual classes decreased from \$300K+ last year to \$36K this year due to purchase of Adobe Creative Suite, licenses, and upgrades for all of the high schools in the District in 2008-09. He indicated that the District typically expends approximately \$30K per year for classroom software.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve contract extension for Educational Software. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve contract extension for Locks & Doors. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

C. FACILITIES

Contracts

1. **Renovations to Schools #50 and #57 (Resolution No. 2009-10: 788)**
2. **Renovations to Wilson Commencement Academy (Resolution No. 2009-10: 789)**

Motion by Commissioner White to approve contracts for renovations of School #50 and School #57. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve contracts for renovation of Wilson Commencement Academy. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Final Payments

3. **Michael A. Ferraulio Plumbing & Heating, Inc. – renovations to East High School (Resolution No. 2009-10: 790)**
4. **Kaplan-Schmidt Electric, Inc. – renovations to School #3 (Resolution No. 2009-10: 791)**
5. **Kaplan-Schmidt Electric, Inc. – renovations to School #5 (Resolution No. 2009-10: 792)**
6. **Kaplan-Schmidt Electric, Inc. – renovations to School #6 (Resolution No. 2009-10: 793)**
7. **Kaplan-Schmidt Electric, Inc. – renovations to School #28 (Resolution No. 2009-10: 794)**
8. **Leo J. Roth Corporation – renovations to School #7 (Resolution No. 2009-10: 795)**

9. **Leo J. Roth Corporation – renovations to Jefferson High School
(Resolution No. 2009-10: 796)**
10. **Lloyd Mechanical Co., LLC – renovations to Charlotte High School
(Resolution No. 2009-10: 797)**
11. **Massa Construction, Inc. – renovations to Charlotte High School
(Resolution No. 2009-10: 798)**

Commissioner White inquired whether data is monitored regarding M/WBE participation and number/percentage of waivers granted over time. Mr. Underwood responded that he is in the process of preparing a report with this data to the Board, also indicating the extent of M/WBE participation for specific trades.

Commissioner White also suggested providing Board recognition for staff members who have expended extra effort to advance Board goals, such as increasing M/WBE participation or improving graduation rates.

Commissioner Powell noted that all of the final payments involve quite small change orders which have been reconciled against the contract. Mr. Underwood emphasized that the history of every job and every change order is contained in the Quarterly Change Order Report provided to Commissioners, urging them to present questions upon reviewing this report rather than waiting until the final payment which could be up to one year later.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve all above final payment resolutions. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Other

12. **SWBR Architecture, Engineering & Landscape Architecture, PC
(Resolution No. 2009-10: 799)**

Jerome Underwood explained that this resolution is for design of proposed renovations to East High School to assist in developing small learning communities. He stated that funds have been allocated for this project in the CIP, but this is for performing the initial design work.

Commissioner White asked about efforts in recruiting an M/WBE firm to perform this work. Mr. Underwood replied that one bid was submitted by an M/WBE firm, but they did not have experience with design of school buildings. He stated that this firm performs exceptional work and will be considered for projects in the future.

Commissioner Cruz asserted that he will be monitoring M/WBE participation, particularly with all of the projects involved in the FMP; he inquired as to efforts made by the District to assist M/WBE firms in developing capacity to enhance their ability to secure contracts in the future. Mr. Underwood stated that the Board will be notified shortly of the selection of the FMP program manager, noting that capacity development was a significant part of the discussion with these firms in the

interviews. capacity development was a significant part of the discussion with the firms in the interviews. Mr. Underwood explained that there is difficulty in obtaining M/WBE contractors in certain trades and in assisting firms in advancing from primarily subcontractor status to direct involvement with the work (i.e. “boots on the ground”). He pointed out that the FMP will be carried out over quite a few years and it would be a natural progression for students from the new school of construction to work on projects to modernize the schools in the future. Mr. Underwood also emphasized the importance of students learning entrepreneurial skills as well as a trade.

Commissioner White inquired as to the role of the District in selecting the FMP Program Manager. Mr. Underwood replied that the RFP will be released within 1-2 weeks and the District has significant input into the selection to ensure that the work is meeting educational directives. He noted that the Joint Schools Construction Board will have the final decision.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve above resolution for an agreement with SWBR Architecture, PC. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

D. OTHER

1. Certica Solutions, Inc. (Resolution 2009-10: 802)

Jeanette Silvers asserted that Certica Solutions is one of the only companies that provides software to sweep through different systems to capture data needed for NYS reporting. Currently, staff in the Office of Accountability have to extract data manually through IEP Direct, Chancery, and the Level 0 Data Warehouse for manual inspection of all data elements to identify inaccurate or missing data. These staff members then contact the schools to rectify errors. Ms. Silvers noted that there are approximately 15,000 errors identified in this manner, which is quite labor intensive and time-consuming for staff. She stated that the software package would enhance efficiency and improve accuracy in identifying errors. Ms. Silvers reported that the Yonkers School District has utilized this software as a pilot in their IEP Direct system, saving \$30K in the first week by identifying students who had not been reported and another \$90K in locating duplicate referrals for Special Education summer school programs. The \$120K realized in cost savings covered the entire cost of the software program. Ms. Silvers stated that she had also contacted the Ramapo School District because they have been using this software for over a year; staff in the Ramapo School District reported that they have minimized errors in NYS reporting to the point where it is no longer necessary for central office staff to contact schools to point out errors or missing data.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve above resolution to obtain software package from Certica Solutions. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

2. Aventa Learning (Resolution 2009-10: 825)

Tim Cliby explained that Aventa Learning offers an online credit recovery program to assist students in obtaining the credits needed toward graduation. A pilot is planned for September to January in the high schools being restructured; the results will indicate modifications needed prior to expansion to all high schools. Mr. Cliby stated that programming will begin May 1st for summer school and funding is currently available for the pilot project. Use of software licenses will be maximized by enabling transfer from one student completing a course to another student just beginning.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve above resolution for obtaining an online credit recovery program from Aventa Learning. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

3. Central Kitchen (Resolution 2009-10: 787)

Mr. Underwood reported that some work on the Central Kitchen was performed over the Christmas break and that replacement of the 30-year-old equipment will take place this summer. He stated that the RFP was issued yesterday, with the hope of having the vendor selected in time for the April 29th Board Business meeting. During the summer, the Central Kitchen will be closed and approximately \$800-850K will be expended for new equipment, which will allow more cooking to be done onsite and thereby expand the menu. Mr. Underwood estimated that these upgrades would be completed by August 16th to allow time for training staff prior to the beginning of school. Next year the building renovation needs will be addressed.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the impact of the expanded menu and cooking capacity on improving nutrition and healthy choices for students. Mr. Underwood replied that the upgrades will allow more fresh foods to be prepared and a greater selection of healthy choices to be made available than in the past.

Mr. Underwood noted that RCSD will not be providing the lunch program this summer for the City of Rochester, not only because of the closure of the Central Kitchen but also due to consistent operating losses of approximately \$100K per year. The ongoing operating loss is reduced volume of meals with the same number of staff. For this summer, he has recommended that the City partner with Foodlink for the lunch program.

Commissioner White expressed concern regarding proposed layoffs of BENTE employees because they are City residents paying taxes and also serve as role models through their direct contact with students. He emphasized that BENTE employees are primarily of color with the highest unemployment rate who struggle to meet the needs of their families. Mr. Underwood described efforts to encourage Foodlink to hire existing Food Service employees for the summer lunch program, requesting that these employees be considered first in hiring with Foodlink.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve above resolution for upgrades to the Central Kitchen. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of the parent representative.

E. TRANSPORTATION

1. 2010-13 School Years (Resolution No. 2009-10: 800)

Commissioner Powell pointed out that this resolution is for renewal of existing Laidlaw and A&E Transport Services contracts. Mr. Underwood clarified that these contracts are specifically for transport of Special Education students.

Commissioner White described going to drop off sites for students riding RTS buses and witnessing fights breaking out within a short time of the students being dropped off. He asked whether consideration has been given to using the red Security vehicles to monitor student safety at drop off points. Mr. Underwood replied that this is actually within the jurisdiction of his colleague, Lori Baldwin, as Director of the Office of Safety & Security. He reported having discussed this very issue with RTS staff in a meeting earlier today. Mr. Underwood emphasized that this is primarily a behavioral issue rather than a transportation issue because fights break out wherever students are dropped off.

Mr. Felix Jacobs asked whether there are any plans for the District to purchase new buses. Mr. Underwood replied that the District currently owns 82 buses and there are no plans for additional purchases due to budget constraints.

Commissioner Powell inquired as to the number of buses used to transport Special Education students. Maria Mello-Dupre responded that there are currently 22 buses to transport up to 30 Special Education students according to their schedule, which is based on the student's IEP and the discretion of the school principal.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that cost savings could be realized through strengthening zone boundaries to prevent inefficiencies from buses with low capacity from travelling long distances. She asked whether consideration has been given to using the smaller buses or vans for these students if the zone boundaries are not going to be enforced.

Commissioner White emphasized the importance of considering the larger community context of decisions regarding cost reductions, particularly when shifting to a privatization model and thereby reducing access to employment for City residents. He noted that the big economic engines of our community are currently educational institutions rather than manufacturing; these changes have made employment much more difficult for many City residents, particularly those of color. Mr. Underwood responded that the role of District staff is to conduct research and present options with an analysis of comparative advantages and disadvantages to enable the Board to make decisions.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve above resolution to extend existing transportation contracts for transport of Special Education students. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner White. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0**, with concurrence of parent representative.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

Next Meeting: May 20th at 5:30PM