

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Community and Intergovernmental Relations
Committee Meeting
December 10, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioner Cynthia Elliott (Chair), Commissioner Mary Adams, Commissioner Melisza Campos, **District Staff:** Edwin Lopez, **Parent Representative:** Felix Jacobs; **Board Staff:** Kimberly Turner

Commissioner Elliott called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

I. Minutes.

Commissioner Elliott made a motion to approve the October 15, 2013 minutes; seconded by Commissioner Adams. Mr. Jacobs concurred.

Commissioner Elliott made a motion to amend the November 9th meeting minutes to include her request to have a moment of silence in honor of Veterans Day. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Campos. Mr. Jacobs concurred.

II. Miscellaneous:

Commissioner Elliott made a motion to amend today's agenda to add a topic to review the long-term school suspension policy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Campos. Mr. Jacobs concurred.

The long-term school suspension topics to review:

- Change long-term suspension from 45 days to 10 days; long-term suspension 2 weeks and short-term suspension 3-5 days.
- Consider factors in the student's behavior that caused suspensions.
- Identify services provided to students in suspension.
- Identify inequitable practices in student suspensions.
- Identify school environmental issues that cause negative behaviors leading to suspensions.

Commissioner Adams inquired about the status of LyncX Academy and 7th and 8th grade availability. (**Action item: Find out the status of LyncX Academy**)

Commissioner Adams stated that the school expo event, previously held in January, has been cancelled. Commissioner Adams stated that this is a missed opportunity for face to face conversation with parents and to advocate for neighborhood schools. Commissioner Elliott suggested that a letter be sent to the Superintendent to ask for reinstatement of this event. Commissioner Campos stated that in past years an event was held prior to the school expo (and later combined with the school expo) that facilitated meetings with key District services (Transportation, Food etc.) and parents. This event might be reconsidered in lieu of the school expo. **Action item:** Draft a letter to the Superintendent indicating that the CIGR committee is against cancellation of the school expo. The letter to include the following key points: Hosting the event at a RCSD location to reduce costs and the importance of continuing excellent customer service.

III. Legislative Breakfast Debriefing:

Commissioner Campos suggested that the committee arrange meetings at the Governor's office to present Legislative Agenda before the Governor introduces his budget. **Action item:** Determine when the Governor begins the budget negotiation.

Commissioner Elliott reviewed items on the 2013 Legislative Agenda supported by Assemblyman Gantt. This included the item to increase student's minimum drop out age from 16 to 18 years old.

Commissioner Elliott suggested that the minutes from November 9th Legislative Agenda Breakfast be reviewed to determine if further changes should be made to the 2013 Legislative Agenda and provide action items to solicit support for it. Possible review date, March 11, 2014 during the CIGR committee meeting.

Commissioner Elliott suggested creating a schedule of meetings times to meet with State, County and City officials. **Action item:** Contact government offices to determine the best time to meet with officials.

Mr. Lopez stated two ideas to gain support for Legislative Agenda items during the budget. The first was to work a backwards process, i.e. if the Agenda items needed to be approved for March/April then to introduce them in January. The second suggestion is to meet with key people that would support the Legislative Agenda in the budget process. Mr. Lopez suggested Jocelyn Dax, (Deputy Director of Budget Studies (Education & General Govt.) and Senator John J. Flanagan, Chair of Senate Standing

Committee on Education. Mr. Lopez stated that Assemblyman Gantt may be able to facilitate meetings.

Mr. Lopez stated that the Legislative Agenda items may gain more support if associated with a Bill or Legislation.

Commissioner Campos suggested attending the Federal Relations Network event sponsored by the National School Board Association. This annual meeting is held in January and is facilitated with government officials such as Congresswoman Louise Slaughter and her education staff. Commissioner Campos stated that CIGR Legislative Agenda items (Federal) coincide with topics presented at this meeting.

Commissioner Elliott asked Mr. Lopez for an update on full day funding for pre-kindergarten, specifically, is transportation offered?

Commissioner Elliott asked Mr. Lopez to provide information to the CIGR committee regarding any meetings that are held with government officials. This helps the committee to add any appropriate items that coincides with topics being presented.

IV. Community Forum for School violence:

Commissioner Elliott discussed the value of the CIGR committee sponsoring a community forum on school violence. The purpose would be to capture the community views and bring items back to the full Board to consider new policies and strategies for the District to deploy. This will allow audience input on decision making. The format could be similar to the community forum on RCSD Condom Availability Program. The proposed community forum on School Violence could be held at either Wilson Foundation Academy or Wilson High School Commencement.

Mr. Jacobs commented on a recent letter sent from the Superintendent to student's home. It addressed violence and the importance of the entire community collaborating to address these issues. Mr. Jacobs stated that the community would include homeowners, business owners and churches in the neighborhood, especially Wilson High School Commencement.

Commissioner Adams discussed recent community forums and offered these following key points:

- Purpose was to address and impact community violence in schools within the same area.
- A meeting was held at the Arnett library and included workers in the area, employees from RCSD, Pathways to Peace, Safety Smart, youth workers, and Woodward Health Center.
- The goal should be to create a preventive approach and obtain concrete solutions and outcomes.
- Identify resources, to mobilize, provide tools and solutions to address issues.

Commissioner Elliott offered key points to consider after a community forum is held:

- Key decision makers must acknowledge the reality of what is happening.
- Education has to be first priority.
- Understand the community, the people within the City of Rochester.
- Utilize experienced professionals.
- Provide funding for programs such as Pathways to Peace.
- Demand action based on information that comes from forums.
- Create initiatives to hold property owners accountable for some of the violence (Mr. Jacobs).

Commissioner Elliott asked Commissioner Adams to provide written information from the Community forums that were held. (**Action item**)

Commissioner Adams stated that the meeting was not a forum but a concrete meeting that resulted in action items. Teen Empowerment, Woodward Health Center and Boys and Girls Club have considered pulling together to address community issues. Woodward Health Center volunteered to donate space to hold the meeting. Commissioner Adams stated that students need to know that we are working in their best interest. She also noted the recent student vigil held by 50 students.

Mr. Jacobs stated that there are influential people who live in the 19th ward and are ready to help.

Commissioner Campos suggested a forum for the students to gather their ideas, show our support and get information directly from them. She stated that this will provide concrete information prior to the budget process and provide time to influence the process.

The time frame for the Community Forum was discussed. Commissioner Campos suggested holding the forum after midterms.

Commissioner Adams stated that we are aware of issues that are going to be mentioned. She recommended being proactive and bring solutions to the meeting. Commissioner Adams stated that student's issues include need for jobs, teachers that disrespect them, discouragement, and lack of safety outside of school and negative school atmosphere and environment. Commissioner Adams stated that the committee should focus on what we can do and action behind the meeting is important.

Commissioner Elliott stated the importance of collaboration with the City of Rochester and Monroe County officials to provide resources to students (i.e. for jobs and resource to get jobs).

Action Items:

1. Research the timing of Governor's budget cycle: when does it begin and end?
2. Compile a list of the Legislative Agenda items supported by Government officials who attended the breakfast.
3. Contact government offices to determine the best time to meet with officials and create a schedule of meeting times.
4. Draft a letter to the Superintendent indicating that the CIGR committee is against cancellation of the School Expo. See key points mentioned above.
5. Commissioner Adams to provide information from previous community forums.

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Elliott at 7:45 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Adams. Mr. Jacobs concurred with the motion.