

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Community and Intergovernmental Relations
2013 Legislative Breakfast
November 9, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.

MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioner Cynthia Elliott (Chair), Commissioner Mary Adams, Commissioner Melisza Campos, Commissioner Malik Evans; District Staff: Edwin Lopez, Parent Representative: Felix Jacobs; Board Staff: Kimberly Turner - There is a signup sheet that including all outside the RSCD attendees.

I. Introductions: ALL

II. Greetings from the Board: Commissioner White

Commissioner White's message was that we should strive to collaborate, cooperate and communicate among the separate entities. This has not always happened, "3 on 3" collaboration with the City and RSCD/BOE has been successful. A Monroe County partnership would add tremendous value to meeting the needs of our children.

Commissioner Elliott asked for a moment of silence in honor of Veterans Day.

III. Rochester Schools Modernization Plan: Ms. Lois Giess, Chair

Ms. Giess handouts included a press release: *Student and Teachers Welcomed back to New Facilities as Part of Rochester School Modernization Program* and notes on *Rochester Joint School Construction Board (RJSCB)*.

Ms. Giess provided updates on Schools #17, 50, Charlotte, Franklin, and Franklin's Auditorium completed under Phase I-A. Phase I-B will include Schools #5, 12, 28, 58 and Monroe. Money has been available for both phases. Ms. Giess stated that going forward, to continue momentum, collaboration from the State Assembly, School District, City and County is needed to create the legislation for Phase 2. There are four phases that total over \$1 billion dollars over 10 year period. Ms. Giess stressed the importance of continuing and not stopping the current momentum of the projects. Health facilities were built into School #17 and Monroe High School.

According to Ms. Giess, minority owned businesses represented 28% of the labor force used in the projects. There have been lessons learned and as a result, there was a subcontractors meeting focused on what the Board of Education can do to ensure success for subcontractors. Ms. Giess stated that there were partnerships created between small businesses and other Rochester businesses; Project Labor agreement created from these phases is a "model for others to follow".

Assemblyman David Gantt brought up concerns that minority businesses have to be 20% of the action. He stated that 20% minority people working on projects is not the same as 20% minority businesses owners working on projects.

Superintendent Vargas stated that collaboration is important as facilities are equipped to meet the needs of the community. It takes effort for all to make it happen. Lessons learned in the execution are important.

Commissioner White asked for additional data on the FMP projects. Ms. Giess stated that she would have the information forwarded to him.

IV. 2013 Legislative Agenda - County:

Commissioner Elliott stated that although the Board did not approve 2013 Legislative items for the County it is necessary to create a collaborative relationship with the county; especially since many RCSD families receive services from the County. Commissioner Elliott referenced the Educational Neglect Law and the need to have partnerships with the county. Commissioner Elliott asked others to discuss any concerns around Policy Development.

Commissioner Adams stated that fundamental stability of our children is needed to support basic needs before they enter school, i.e. daycare to support the working poor and offer predictability to working parents. Commissioner Adams referenced the *Nurse Family Partnership*; an evidence based program to prepare our youngest children before they enter school. Commissioner Adams also stated that RCSD has failed generations of students who are now parents and it is time for intervention and to repair some of the negative things that have occurred.

County Legislator Willie Lightfoot remarked about the low graduation rate of RCSD students and the fact that it's been stated in order for this rate to change something needs to change or be fixed at the student's home. Mr. Lightfoot stated that the home needs to have an assessment completed and parents cannot be blamed while the problem is left unattended. Mr. Lightfoot mentioned attendance as a problem as well and the county should play a major role in addressing the issues. Mr. Lightfoot stated that and he and his constituents should work and help the County have a greater role. Mr. Lightfoot stated that he sits on the Human Service Committee along with colleagues County Legislators Carrie Andrews and Cynthia Kaleh (both attendees at this breakfast). Services are being provided by the county for parents and children (families). Commissioner Adams asked were families not utilizing the services. Mr. Lightfoot stated that they were but it can be strengthened.

County Legislator Carrie Andrews also confirmed Mr. Lightfoot's comments and stated that coordination with the district would be effective because the same families are often involved. Ms. Andrews stated that childcare monies run out – and parents are on and off the wait list for help that is driven by available funds. She also stated that the county's budget is due on Tuesday, (November 12th, 2013). She stated that the Nurse Family Partnership program has been funded.

County Legislator Cynthia Kaleh stated that County collaborations are overdue. She commented that school #17 is in her district and is good for the neighborhood. Ms. Kaleh is also on the ABC Board of Directors and serves on Head Start Board. Ms. Kaleh said that transportation is something that perhaps the families need help with and might be an area of collaboration.

Commissioner White stated that “3 on 3 on 3” – collaborations between the RCSD, Monroe county and the City of Rochester should be part of the legislative agenda also include who will be involved in these meetings.

County Legislator Mike Patterson stated that three is a significant attendance problem. There is communication from RCSD to DSS; maybe there needs to be a standard as there is significant impact of outcomes and budgets.

Commissioner Adams said the truancy outreach work initiated by the Superintendent has been helpful.

Superintendent Vargas suggested summer jobs as a way to keep youth engaged in positive activities and meet multidimensional needs.

Mr. Porter commented on the effective use of Telemedicine, which would allow a child to be treated at a remote site, a site other than the emergency room, which would not only help the school District but also the County as it would reduce the cost of emergency and ensure more preventive healthcare. This could be beneficial to the child and the parent. He suggested this be a priority of the 3-on-3-on-3 incentives. Mr. Porter suggested some concerns would be funding collaboration, equipment and other resource collaboration.

V. 2013 Legislative Agenda - NYS:

1. Increase funding for Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs: provide the flexibility to increase the program to full-day services for three year olds, and fund transportation. Continue to advocate for permanent, stable funded full-day pre-kindergarten.

2. Provide additional funds for K-3 reading teachers.

Commissioner Elliott asked for State Assemblymen and State Senators (and representatives) for updates on the above NYS agenda items.

Senator O’Brien stated that educational funding was his priority and he believes that there will be a budget battle in the upcoming year. He stressed the importance of having data to support long-term consequences of not having funds for these programs, also include how we can make this programs better work while saving monies in the long run. He stated that Senator Gallivan and Senator Robach were also instrumental in supporting the increase in funding.

Assemblyman Harry Bronson discussed the pre-k funding model that he is currently supporting in the Assembly and on the Educational Committee. The program would have full day pre-k for selected 4 year olds and based on high priority and school with the greatest needs and then program will be opened to all 4 year olds. The program’s next step would introduce full day pre-k to 3 year olds, with high priority (high needs district) and them eventually all 3 year olds. Eventually the pre-k program would include all 4 and 3 year olds. Assemblyman Bronson stated that finding dollars to fund this program is not easy as NYS is struggling financially and this should not be a

competitive process we should do for all but the reality is that there is not enough money.

Mr. Ed Lopez stated that RCSD applied for a RFP from the State to support 400 full day pre-K students. The RFP is waiting to be approved; he expects to hear by December 2013. This will be for students to start in January 2014.

Commissioner Adams stated that Rochester has model Pre-k programs and especially pre-K school parent programs. She stated that pushing the standards, common core to the pre-k level could be costly, and she urges that early childhood experts be consulted for initiating this pre-k model; expanding the program, the way it is, as it is proved to work, is more crucial than implementing new standards.

Assemblyman Gantt stated that Universal Pre-K is a program of the Assembly established some time ago. The problem is now - who has talked to the Governor and his staff. The budget process is happening now. The Governor's budget is due the third week of January. Assemblyman Gantt stated that "It's about politics when it comes to dollars. We ought to be beating the Governor's doors down" now. He suggested lobbying representatives from different parts of NYS to ensure that RCSD programs are funded.

Assemblyman Bronson discussed his support of the "Winning Beginnings" program and a strategy session he held with the organization. He stressed the importance of getting linked in with state representatives and the Governor for additional pre-k funding. Assemblyman Bronson stated that it's important to not be in the reactionary mode (of budget); waiting for the Governor's budget to come out and then react. Information should be presented to the Governor while the budget is being put together and priorities are being set.

3. Increase the District's school year calendar from 180 to 200 days and provide necessary funding increases.

Assemblyman Gantt asked where the District stood with increasing the District's school year calendar from 180 to 200 days. Superintendent Vargas stated that getting to 200 days is a financial struggle – as more money is needed to fund the resources that are required. Superintendent Vargas also stated that Rochester needed to end the fact that it provided the least amount of instructional time to students; it was important also to target pre-k – 3rd grades, in particular summer learning.

4. Advocate to the drop-out age to 18 in the Rochester City School District and state-wide. RCSD's drop-out age at present is 17. There is empirical evidence that increasing the drop-out age will keep about 25% of potential drop-outs in school

Commissioner Elliott stated that advocating increasing the dropout age to 18 years old was created because the longer the child stays in school the better they are to make better decisions.

Mr. Porter asked what happens to the child at 18. What are the consequences of a child not coming to school? What things are in place to force them to comply at 18 years old when they are not complying now? Commissioner Elliott stated that as the student matures they may be better persuaded to consider school as a viable option and the importance of education. It's a district's issue to deal with the student if they are not complying and provide options.

Assemblyman Gantt stated that this would be an idea that would be able to pass fairly easily. Assemblyman Gantt mentioned that alternative programs such as some of the former schools that offered trades to students are needed. He also stated that what keeps our kids in school is not age alone. He also stated that keeping the kids in school could also mean more dollars to the District.

Assemblyman Bronson stated that there is a need for a culture that values education especially young people and families. He also commented on the Career and Technical Diplomas bill he sponsors.

Senator O'Brien stated that there are machine jobs available in Penfield that pay at least \$50,000/year. He stated that transportation issues are a problem for kids; it is difficult for them to get to some of these programs without transportations.

Commissioner White agreed that we should plan on what to do with these children before we change the law. Commissioner Elliott agreed that we need to have things in place but changing the age, according to the evidence, increase the dropout age to 18 will retain about 25% of potential drop-outs.

Superintendent Vargas stated that the infrastructure is not set up for Career and Technical Education programs an immediate solution would be BOCES as a good resource. Superintendent Vargas stated that he is waiting for a bill to be passed to allow the District to use BOCES as an alternative. He commented on other success program in RSCD such as the Rochester Firefighter program offered at East High.

Mr. Joe Brown stated that key representation of parents and families is missing at meetings that specifically deal with students issues. He continued with the reality is that these children do not leave home life at the school door and family life shapes rather or not a child will stay in school. Mr. Felix Jacob stated that he will be following up with Superintendent Vargas on some of the concerns that Mr. Brown noted as it is important to keep the parents engaged.

Mr. Porter asked if the Facility Modernization Programs is designed to accommodate some of the new CTE programs that would need a place to be housed. Ms. Giess responded that Edison Tech is being multi-faced and infrastructure and other things will be built into the plan. Assemblyman Grant suggested that to get disruptive students out of class give them opportunities to get a trade and earn money.

5. Obtain permanent, adequate funding for school health services, and the permanent ability to access, partner with, and/or contract with the full range of health care provider, insurance and technological assets of the community, expressly including, but not limited to BOCES. The Rochester City School District will receive a \$6.292 million dollars School Health Services grant in 2013-14. There are not any restrictions on the use of health care providers in the grant.

Assemblyman Gantt said that this has been problem since the County and the City backed off. He stated that it's a pre-existing program and one of the easier items on the list. Assemblyman Gantt stated that he believes that this could be passed.

6. Additional State aid in the Foundation Aid formula would provide an increase to Rochester, in part, for the ELL students under the district's Contract for Excellence. However, the Executive Budget Request freezes this funding at the current year level and further imposes a Deficit Reduction Assessment (DRA). Advocating for the State to restore the DRA and allow the funding formula to advance would benefit all of Rochester's high need pupils including ELL students. Advocate as appropriate for original funding formula to be restored, in addition to rescinding the DRA.

President Malik Evans –stated that this is making sure that ELL students have a fair share of funding to ensure that students are success. They are a large size of the District.

Superintendent Vargas stated that ELL is not just Spanish speaking students but Asian and other minorities there are about 94 different languages represented in the District. There are additional costs to educating ELL students.

Assemblyman Gantt stated that it is about how many new students are coming into the district and why is an increase needed? Superintendent Vargas stated that he would be able to provide this answer at a later time.

7. Advocate on behalf of other Department of Education grant applications.

Commissioner Elliott stated that Legislative items was introduced by District staff and would like any support to get grants that could be effectively utilized in the District.

VI. 2013 Legislative Agenda - United States Government:

1. Monitor the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and advocate as appropriate for features and elements of concern to the District (e.g., accountability, performance management).

President Evans stated that changes are needed and the No Child Left Behind act has had a detrimental impact on the RCSD and it has not been reauthorized in many years.

2. Advocate on behalf of other Department of Education grant applications.

3. Furthermore, revisions to the federal NCLB statute regarding accountability measures for the ELL population should allow for more seat time for these students prior to taking the mandatory ELA exams.

President Evans stated that students who are not accustomed to English as a first language are struggling with many things in the district including test taking in English. There needs to be supports in place to help these students succeeded. This is not fair to ask them to do this.

Mr. Bryan Sanders stated that Senator Gillibrand agenda includes looking into the NCLB act. It continues to be important to her. Mr. Sanders also stated that when applying for grants to let Senator Gillibrand's office know because they will be able to offer letters of support.

President Evans asked Mr. Sanders if Senator's Gillibrand office is made of aware of grants information and it could be shared with RCSD, in particularly grants to fund safety and Juvenile Justice issues. Mr. Sanders said the Senator Gillibrand office is open to sit down and discuss these types of opportunities. Commissioner Elliott also asked for information on grant opportunities to support more social and emotional needs of the child.

Assemblyman Bronson asked about Common Core issues including its implementation and be mindful that the Federal Government has a role to play in this and we need to advocate for parameters changes at the Federal level.

Superintendent Vargas stated that sequestration is the worst threat to the RSCD and agency partners (ABC, Ibero America) as we rely on funding. Dr. Vargas stated that this ultimately has a great impact on the services that our children receive. He asked the Mr. Sanders relay these concerns to Senator Gillibrand. Commissioner Elliott asked that Mr. Sanders comment on the impact that sequester had on the funding. Mr. Bryant said that they are currently working on the budget and Senator Schumer is also on that committee. He is optimistic that this is happening soon and Senator Gillibrand is focused on authorizing the funds.

VII. 2013 Legislative Agenda – CITY:

1. Collaborate with the City on appropriate initiatives including, but not limited to, the Facilities Modernization Program, the truancy program, and additional items as determined and/or developed by the 3-on-3 Taskforce.

Commissioner Elliott commented on the existing relationship between the City and RCSD and stated that it has been a positive collaboration thus far. Commissioner White reiterated the need to include the County on the 3-on-3 task force.

VIII. Closing Remarks

Commissioner Elliott acknowledged the importance of preparing the Legislative Agenda earlier to be able to be in a position to lobby for funding prior to the budgets being set.