

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Special Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2019

Board Members in Attendance: President Van Henri White, Vice President Cynthia Elliott, Commissioner Judith Davis, Commissioner Elizabeth Hallmark, Commissioner Beatriz LeBron, Commissioner Willa Powell, and Commissioner Natalie Sheppard.

Administration and Board Officers in Attendance: Chief of Staff, Linda Cimusz, General Counsel Karl Kristoff, and Acting Clerk Francine Scott.

President White convened the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

I. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Sheppard's daughter.

II. Acceptance of Minutes:
None

President White asked for a moment of silence for a New York City Police Officer that was slain and people that have been affected by senseless death.

Vice President Elliott arrived at 5:50 p.m.

III. Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item

Parent, Howard Eagle, representing the Take It Down Planning Committee, Faith Community Alliance Movement for Anti-racist Ministry, and Action Coalition spoke about the lack of participation from parents and families to gather input for next Superintendent, and suggested involving a community advisory group to engage the community in the Superintendent Search process.

IV. BWP & Associates Presentation

Dr. Castner, Dr. Mack., and Dr. McKendrick presented their findings from the online survey, focus groups, and a community forum for the Superintendent Search. Dr. Castner indicated that Community Engagement objectives was ensure the broadest possible community participation in the Superintendent Search process and identify the qualities and characteristics that the next Superintendent should possess and demonstrate. He said the focus groups included community leaders and District partners, clergy, and student advocacy groups. In addition, he revealed 455 people responded to the online survey with 75 percent staff and 25 community members, and one community forum that was held at East High School.

Dr. McKendrick discussed the search survey results, where the same questions was posed to all participants. The questions comprised of, what are the strengths of the District; what the District greatest challenges are; and what skills, experiences, and what characteristics the next Superintendent should exhibit. Dr. McKendrick pointed out a few the strengths

being excellent teachers and staff, educational programs and available resources and technology. He also stated the survey revealed one of the most challenging issues the District face is funding. He indicated 76 percent of survey participants felt that the next Superintendent should have experience in a multi-cultural community. Mr. McKendrick said that all the information collected was used to create a Leadership profile and that after the Commissioners review the data, they may find it necessary to revise the profile.

Dr. Mack stated the descriptions used to compose the Leadership Profile were Instruction, Management, Communication, and Personal Qualities and Leadership Attributes. Dr. Mack indicated that candidate should demonstrate success in turnaround experiences that improved student achievement in schools. He also said the next Superintendent should have experience in strategic planning that result in the development and implementation of action plans that hold people accountable. Dr. Mack also said the candidate should address and help to resolve issues of race, racism, and equity. He mentioned that the Leadership Profile is a draft and that the Commissioners could revise the profile. He also said BWP & Associates would need the Commissioners to respond with revisions within a couple of weeks.

Vice President Elliott said she was concerned that 75 percent of the teaching population is white and the student population is reverse, which would skew the results from the survey. In addition, she stated 56 percent of the responses say the District has excellent teachers and staff, but she felt if that were the case, the District should have a higher graduation rate and greater test scores. Commissioner Davis asked how many people from the 25 percent were students and parents. Dr. Castner replied that very few students and parents participated and mostly parents in the community responded, and the groups were more community people. He explained that we lost a day to have a community forum due to the weather. Currently there are 15 applicants, and five seem to be promising. Commissioner Davis was concerned that the Leadership Profile was not complete prior to the advertisement of the Superintendent vacancy. Dr. Caster explained that the Superintendent vacancy was advertised as soon as their agreement with the Board of Education was signed. The Superintendent vacancy announcement was advertised early January and was shared with the National Superintendent Association. Dr. Castner said candidates would be given an updated profile that would include feedback from the online surveys, students, parents, and the community. Commissioner Davis requested that institutional racism be included in the update for the Leadership Profile.

President White stated the Democrat and Chronicle was taking the lead on a student form and Chief of Communications, Carlos Garcia, worked with the Democrat and Chronicle to help coordinate the forum to gather information for what students would like to see in the next Superintendent. President White further stated there was an excellent turn out for the student forum, as it was standing room only with students from various backgrounds. President White also said the online survey appeared weighted by teachers while the community it serves is a much broader base. Dr. Castner said that he did not see the student forum video and suggested posting the Superintendent Search Firm's report and comments from the student's video on the District's website. Commissioner LeBron stated the Board should have further conversation about the Leadership Profile. She also expressed that the Democrat and Chronicle student forum should have been in collaboration

with Superintendent Search Firm interviews.

Dr. Aquino stated with 15 applicants and two weeks left to apply, how would that compare with other searches with vetting, do the applicants fit the profile. Dr. Castner says it is low at this time and they are looking for a quality pool of applicants. Commissioner Davis asked could have the District done something different to bring wide spread awareness to the District for more community outreach. Dr. Castner suggested doing another outreach to students, parents, the community and reopening the online survey. Dr. Castner also said, the candidate chosen could have a day in the city visiting a high school or middle school, and attend a press conference so that the community could ask questions. Commissioner Sheppard advised that have the link to apply for the Superintendent vacancy position should be on the District's website.

Commissioner Powell requested that we reopen of the survey for parents and the community to respond. Dr. Castner says he can reopen the survey until March 1, 2019. Commissioner Davis also says the survey should be advertised with all media outlets. President White reminded of Commissioners there is a cost to advertise. Commissioners LeBron and Sheppard had concerns with paying for advertisement. Commissioner LeBron proposed the School Chiefs reach out to Principals and have students do the online surveys during the school day. President White asked Ms. Cimusz to follow up with the School Chiefs. Dr. Aquino also suggested information from the online survey be shared on the parent portal. Commissioner LeBron also suggested the possibility of printing surveys to send home with students. President White stated that he and the other Commissioners would update the Leadership Profile.

Board Governance:

Commissioner Hallmark introduced a document that she created for the Commissioners to begin to address the actions items from the recommendations as outlined in the Distinguished Educator's report. Commissioner Hallmark asked the other Commissioners to review the action items and put their name alongside the item they would be interested in taking the lead on. Vice President Elliott asked Commissioner Hallmark for clarity in her request, as some of the items are very broad. Commissioner LeBron says the Board should work together to address all of the recommendations. Vice President Elliott asked Administration what approach is the District taking to operationalize their plan in response to the Distinguished Educator's report. Dr. Mascitti-Miller responded that IMT is developing a software system to maintain the information and progress; they will meet weekly with all owners of the document. They are also working to develop a portal to house the document. Dr. Aquino says the District and Board should move forward to implement their plan although New York State Commissioner of Education, MaryEllen Elia, has not replied to District's response to the Distinguished Educator's report. Dr. Mascitti-Miller said they have started implementing some of the action items. Dr. Aquino says tracking and monitoring is important but implementation with results is critical. President White says the Board has also started to address some of their action items, as well. Commissioner Sheppard requested that Dr. Mascitti-Miller include meeting dates and times in the portal. President White thanked Ms. Cimusz and Superintendent Lowengard for their work.

V. ***Review of Student Suspension and School Climate Data***

Chief of Schools, Dr. Idonia Owens, stated the Code of Conduct was revised in 2016 due to a request from building level Administrators, teachers, students and families who felt the previous Code of Conduct was not effective when dealing with student discipline issues. The new Code of Conduct objective is to build positive school culture, school climate, and progressive discipline with interventions before students are suspended from school. Dr. Owens report included a three-year comparison, 2016-17 through 2018-19 point and time. Dr. Owens stated suspensions have decreased over the last three years. However, there are still some concerns with middle school grades, and disproportionality of African American students and students with disabilities. Dr. Owens explained unduplicated suspensions are occurrences that count as one suspension; if a student is suspended multiple times, it is counted as one suspension over the course of the year. She also pointed out that most suspensions happen in middle grades, and African American students continue to be suspended at a disproportionately higher rate than the rest of the racial/ethnic group. The research data reveals that African American students are three times more likely than their white peers to be suspended or expelled are. Dr. Owens shared that students with disabilities are at a disproportionately higher rate than general education students.

Commissioner LeBron stated she does not support suspending students in Prek and Kindergarten. Vice President Elliott suggested creating a resolution. Dr. Aquino asked Dr. Owens why would students in Kindergarten would be suspended and how many students in Prek are suspended. Commissioner Powell suggested perhaps including language in the Code of Conduct rather than creating a resolutions. She also asked if agency Prek students are suspended, and would if we knew if our agency Prek students are suspended. Dr. Owens said she would look into it and follow up. Commissioner Sheppard said that Vice President Elliott through the CIGR Committee has invited Jazmine from The Alliance for Quality Education to do a presentation on suspension. Commissioner Sheppard indicated, The Alliance for Quality Education is advocating at the State level to make it mandate no suspending students under certain grades.

Commissioner LeBron raised concerns with the high rate of suspension at East High School and North STAR. Commissioner LeBron asked when students are suspended from LyncX, where are students assigned, and requested that her question be added to the Board Question Log. Vice President Elliott praised the overall great work done to reduce student suspensions. President White also praised the good work that has done to reduce suspensions, and mentioned that the Board should have a process where important issues could be addressed beyond the Board Question Log. Ms. Cimusz responded that outside the Protocol for Communications, the topic should be shared with Administration, and put on the agenda for further discussion. Dr. Aquino suggested using a Board Informative, a complete document that includes rationalization and implications. Dr. Aquino says he would talk to Superintendent Lowengard and Ms. Cimusz about the document. Vice President Elliott asked what is the strategy used going forward to reduce suspension in middle grades. Dr. Owens replied that working closely with schools currently showing high suspension rates and with families, target Professional Development and support for elementary and middle grade staff, and monitor manifestation determinations for students with disabilities. Commissioner Sheppard asked how does student suspension compare with student dropout rate, is there a correlation. She also asked, when there is no

supervision, what strategies are used. Dr. Owens said she would follow up and shared that there are no Pre-K suspensions this year.

VI. *Review of Financial Updates and Financial Reports*

Chief Executive Officer, Everton Sewell said the Student Activity Report is updated quarterly and schools are updating their information. Commissioner Sheppard asked how many actual students are participating in activities and their school. Commissioner Powell indicated the information would take time to gather, and could be provided on the next quarterly report. Commissioner Sheppard stated the Student Activity Report should be tracked with the student information. Mr. Sewell said the reports are financial but could reach out to the schools with for actual student activity.

VII. *Finance and Resource Allocation Resolutions:*

Mr. Sewell stated the Budget Highlights are the key areas he would be presenting. He indicated that State Aid has increased. Vice President Elliott asked why has there was an increase in transportation. Mr. Sewell explained they had until the end of October and November to load last year's budget information into the ST3 reporting system. They completed uploading the information at the end of January, and the State calculated the information based on the previous year. He was advised by the State that the District would get back 90 percent and there was an increase of 2.9 million. Vice President asked how much money the District has in the Fund Balance. Mr. Sewell responded that Fund balance as of June has 46 million; 6 million is unassigned that can be used any time. He stated that the unrestricted amount is 32 million, and described the unrestricted is made up of unassigned and committed. Commissioner LeBron asked Mr. Sewell to explain unrestricted, and what is the actual amount of money available to address any deficit. Commissioner Powell stated that there is committed money within unrestricted; unrestricted is not to pay a bill, it is set aside as a contingency. Mr. Sewell stated that restricted are any prepaid expenditures, like insurance, or inventory, and everything else is unrestricted; committed dollars would need Board approval, and unassigned which is 6 million if there were an emergency they would not need Board approval. He also said there is usually a contingency line; however, it was not budgeted. The District does not go into fund balance during the year, this year they did. Mr. Sewell stated 22 million was used to balance the budget, and put 5 million back into that line, and now we are down to 15 million. Commissioner LeBron asked to clarify which budget year. Mr. Sewell replied the 2018-19 budget year, and there was a windfall of unexpected funds. It was decided instead assigning the 22 million that the Board authorized; 5 million would be put back into the District's savings account. There was an increase in revenue and it was safe to put 5 million back. Mr. Sewell stated when the District receives revenue the money is put back into the savings. Mr. Sewell further explained that premium and interest are windfalls.

Commissioner LeBron asked how are going to put more money in our savings, even with the windfall. Mr. Sewell says the District received 9 million in Local Revenue, 2.9 million in Transportation, and 1 million in Building Aid. The District also has grant money coming in, usually around 3 million. There is enough money to cover all the expenditures and the 5 million was put back into the District savings after increase of expenditures. Mr. Sewell also said they updated the analysis and the District received savings and made sure they were able to put it aside, which balances out to 11.2 million. Dr. Aquino asked if the 11.2

million in expenditures include the 5 million that was put into savings, and Mr. Sewell agreed. Mr. Sewell also explained that when revenue increases, you have to offset the expenditures for the budget to balance.

Mr. Sewell said most of the gap impact is the General Funds, and as new grants come in, instead of utilizing those resources, they will shift the cost to the Grant and that would relieve the General Fund. Full time employees are recoded when grants come in. Commissioner LeBron stated it does not address the fact that the District does not have money for FTE; the positions are just being moved. Mr. Sewell stated Title I are recurring grants, and they have to wait until the money comes in to move forward, in the meantime, the positions would be coded to the General Fund. The Grant Funding usually comes in every year, they are not sure when.

Commissioner LeBron commented that there is controversy around Title I funding. Vice President Elliott said there should be a work session around Title I Funding; the Board needs to be clear about how Title I funding, and how it is supposed to be used. Mr. Sewell stated last year that the Title I had a clean audit and it was recommended that the Office of Parent Engagement distribute the money to schools and the School Based Planning Teams would authorize how the money is spent. Commissioner LeBron said she knew about the audit, some of the funding used was not agreed. She said there should be an Audit of the staff hired under Title I, and their outcomes working with students.

Mr. Sewell mentioned that the Special Aid Fund grant has increased. Vice President Elliot asked if the grants were aligned with the District's strategic plan. He stated that they are working with the instructional team to review grants and its alignment with instruction. He also mentioned that teacher substitute cost are driven by vacant teacher positions. Mr. Sewell reviewed the Year over Year Budget Analysis - All Funds report and said the District is on target. Mr. Sewell says he is working with Deputy Superintendent, Beth Mascitti-Miller to decide how to move forward with the Director of Community School position. Dr. Aquino asked if Mr. Sewell felt the community at large really understood the seriousness of the District's budget cuts. Mr. Sewell explained that he is working Georgetown University to do things differently and is breaking down the numbers to a per pupil cost, which seems to come across more understandably. Commissioner Hallmark thanked Mr. Sewell for the presentation, and stated it was very clear and informative. Commissioner Sheppard stated she wants to make sure we break down everything by pupil.

New Business

Vice President Elliott stated she is working on the Communications Plan and asked the other Commissioners to send her topics they would like to include as well as how they would like to roll it out to the community. She stated that the budget is one of her major topics she would like to include in the Communications Plan.

VIII. Resolutions

2018-19: 644: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Hallmark. Seconded by Commissioner Davis Adopted 7-0.

IX. Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Hallmark at 9:00 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Davis. Adopted 7-0