

Lawrence, Massachusetts
February 27, 2019

An Informational Meeting of the Lawrence School Committee held this evening at 6:00 P.M. in the Library at the North Common Educational Complex, 233 Haverhill Street, with the following members present: Patricia Mariano, Donna Bertolino, Stacy Seward, Adderly Gonzalez, Marianella Rivera, Vice Chair; and Mayor Dan Rivera, Chair. Absent: Elissa Salas.

Also present was Cynthia Paris, Superintendent, and Joan I. Milone, Recording Secretary.

Marianela Rivera called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M., recited the Pledge of Allegiance and held a Moment of Silence.

- Public Participation

Homayoun Maalé, 52 Chester Street – Addressed the School Committee in support of the Superintendent’s leadership, the Lawrence Teachers’ Union and the upcoming Union Contract and for the new School Calendar.

Marianela Rivera, 2A Washington Street – She addressed the Committee based on the state’s takeover of school districts and remove the School Committee’s representation. She also addressed the School Committee’s request for joint meetings with the LAE Board and that the School Committee meetings’ schedule diminishes community engagement, which shows what is needed for a successful Turnaround Plan.

Thomas Meyers, 550 Haverhill Street – He stated that the School Committee should meet two times per month and once during the summer. Not holding these meetings diminishes the School Committees ability to function properly. He proposed a transition plan and requested to meet with members to move forward to democratic control of elected officials. He also noted that an education forum is scheduled at El Taller restaurant on March 21 concerning the impact of the state takeover on the community and its public education.

Mayor Rivera arrived at 6:15 P.M.

Elizabeth Lavasta, Parent of LPS students – Thanked the board for holding meetings. She addressed the Members on the compulsory testing in the district. She finds that the 6-week continuous ANET testing along with the SAT prep is suppressing the motivation of the students, which is causing their underperformance.

Superintendent/Receivers’ Update –

- Updates

Enrollment Presentation: Superintendent Paris provided an enrollment update with a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the enrollment changes by neighborhood, the current enrollment, the forecasted enrollment and the changes/adjustments the district needs to consider to accommodate the student enrollment. This would include moving students to other schools adjust school caps and their boundaries; remove a grade from a school. The Arlington Middle School has shown consistent gains in students; a proposed short-term solution is to move the Tarbox students (with parents’ approval) who go to ARM, to the Up Leonard for 6-8 grades. There will be meetings held with the students’ parents and principals to provide all the information. The Superintendent then answered questions/concerns of the School Committee members, i.e. the need for additional classroom staff, expense impact associated with plan, students’ achievement based on class size.

Mayor Rivera would like to provide this presentation to the City Council so they understand the district’s desperate need for additional space.

100-Day Listening Tour – Superintendent Paris provided a PowerPoint presentation, which included the process, the district’s (community) strengths, emerging themes and the next steps.

She met and held conversations with students, teachers, parents, community organizations, nonprofits and businesses. The found strengths were the district's people/staff, school level autonomy, central office's support, social emotional learning and inclusion, Expanded-learning time, innovative curricula, enrichment opportunities and community partners. Emerging themes: Superintendent Paris reviewed the following: Improving teacher recruitment and retention; Strengthening systems to support at-risk students; Reshaping the high school redesign plan; and Ensuring equitable distribution of resources. She concluded in presenting the Next Steps – Look further into what are the obstacles to accelerated student learning and with the collaboration of school leaders, the revising of the goals and objectives in the Turnaround Plan. This will become a public document and she will discuss her report with teachers and families.

The board members noted the need for teacher recruitment and retention, bilingual/bicultural teachers, local sourcing, and the creation of a design plan for at risk students. Also noted was the need to highlight the positive opinion of the community and the students' work. The School Committee inquired if they would be one of the stakeholders who will be involved as she revises goals and objectives in the turnaround plan, which the Superintendent concurred.

School Calendar Proposal – Superintendent Paris presented the FY'20 Proposed District-wide Calendar including a few recommendations. The guiding principles are the acknowledgement of chronic absenteeism, teacher retention challenges, and family consideration that have multiple children with multiple school start times. The proposed district-wide calendar is recommending a later start date just prior to Labor Day, an extended December break, and adopted district-wide half-day professional development dates. The schools will provide their proposals for this process with professional development and school autonomy within this calendar.

Mayor Rivera noted that the LTU does support this proposed calendar. He noted the LAE Board discussed concern whether the calendar would conflict with the schools' autonomy.

- Other

The next School Committee meeting scheduled on April 24, 2019. Marienela Rivera stated that they should meet sooner than April and requested that the School Committee vote to hold monthly meetings.

Mayor Rivera suggested the request is discussed at the LAE Board's next meeting.

Stacy Seward noted that the November meeting minutes are not on this meeting's agenda for vote at which time the School Committee voted to request joint meetings between the LAE Board and their board and this request was not added to the agenda.

Marianela Rivera stated in order to strengthen the community; the School Committee should meet monthly.

Upon the motion made by Marienela Rivera, Stacy Seward seconded, it was unanimously

V-01-19 VOTED: To request to the LAE Board that the School Committee can hold monthly meetings.

Upon the motion made by Patricia Mariano, seconded by Stacy Seward, it was unanimously

V-02-19 VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:25 P.M.



Cynthia Paris, Superintendent