

March 13, 2019

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board was held at 6:00 P.M. in the North Common Educational Complex Library, 233 Haverhill Street, with the following members present: Honorable Dan Rivera, Mayor of Lawrence, [Julia Silverio, Lawrence City Councilor and local business owner, Jessica Andors, Executive Director for Lawrence Community Works](#), Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives at DESE, Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee member, Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, VP of NECC Lawrence Campus, and Elma “Gabby” Taveras, Student Representative for the board. Absent: Chairman John Connolly, Executive Director of The 1647, [Inc., Julia Silverio, Lawrence City Councilor and local business owner, Jessica Andors, Executive Director for Lawrence Community Works](#)

Commented [RV(1)]: I don't think John is any longer in this role.

Also present was Superintendent Cynthia Paris and Odanis Hernandez, Recording Secretary for this meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 P.M. by the Dr. Ventura Rodriguez; he then held the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Homayan Maale, 53 Chester Street – He addressed the board in the progress of the district. He also requested their support for the proposed 2019-20 school calendar and for their support for the teachers and the union.

Dr. Rodriguez recommended to adjust the agenda by moving the Budget Update to be taken after the School Calendar Proposal item.

Jessica Andors and Julia Silverio arrived at 6:10 P.M.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Paris noted district highlights; Enlace students are Samsung Finalists “Solve for Tomorrow”, who will travel and compete in NY; and Information Session will take place on March 14 for ELPAC at the NCEC; the first cohort (6 schools/teachers and leadership) of Fellowship Graduations took place on March 12, which are efforts to strengthen family engagement efforts. She thanked Julia Silverio, Pat Mariano and Dan Rivera for participating as judges for the Dancing with the Stars competition.

Report of the Chair

Dr. Rodriguez addressed the members with a reminder of the NEASC email. He hopes they can make the Sunday meeting to start the accreditation process.

Facilities Update

Chris Merlino, Facilities Director and Anne Marie Stronach, COO, presented the update through a video presentation which included Mass. School Building Authorities' /City's appropriation of funds with the projects completed, underway and the two core projects (Oliver & Leahy) which they provided information on the different phases and timelines involved. He and Ms. Stronach then answered questions from the Board.

Budget Guidelines -Dr. Rodriguez noted this was discussed at the previous meeting and has been revised based on discussion.

Upon the motion made by Mayor Rivera, seconded by Julia Silverio,

VOTED: To approve Budget Guidelines for discussion.

Mayor Rivera stated that he thought the last guideline was to note that the LPS budget would mirror the City's budget. The members reflected back to the last meeting's discussion which there was no vote but was to be discussed by the Budget Subcommittee. The members would like to see it in the same format as the City's. Mayor Rivera suggested it is important that it be listed in the Budget Guidelines because it is the aspirational document for the budget.

Upon the motion made by Mayor Rivera, seconded by Jessica Andors, it was unanimously

VOTED: To amend the vote with adding to the last bullet – “to mirror the City budget document to line and department and include capital spending”.

Budget Timelines – Dr. Rodriguez noted that he has provided the members a document that includes three proposed Budget Subcommittee meeting dates, the LAE regular meeting date and a proposed LAE special meeting date (April 25) for the budget hearing and approval.

School Calendar Proposal/School Improvement Plan – Dr. Rodriguez referred the members to multiple documents presented the FY'20 Proposed Districtwide Calendar including a few recommendations. Dr. Rodriguez continued by explaining that the Turnaround Plan lists out the process to implement the School Calendar and the Schools Improvement/Operational Plans. The Superintendent has submitted her proposed SY19-20 School Calendar and based on the calendar's approval, school teams prepare their school operational plans to present to the Superintendent for approval. With the Turnaround Plan, it states that the Receiver approves the school operational plan. For the members' consideration, they were provided a recommendation which provided the Superintendent the LAE's approval of the school operational plan if she herself approves them.

Upon the motion made by Mayor Dan Rivera, seconded by Julia Silverio, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the baseline calendar for the LPS for SY19-20 as submitted.

Upon the motion by Mayor Dan Rivera, seconded by Julia Silverio, it was

VOTED: That any School Operational Plan approved by the Superintendent shall be deemed to be approved by the Lawrence Alliance for Education in its role as Receiver for the Lawrence Public Schools; any School Operational Plan not approved by the Superintendent shall “**under extreme circumstances**” be submitted to the Lawrence Alliance for Education “with a review process that the LAE will define within two months of vote”.

Upon the motion made by Julia Silverio, seconded by Mayor Dan Rivera it was

VOTED: To table the recommendation so the Board can fully consider and understand the process.

Commented [RV(2)]: This vote happened before the vote above about the school operational plans.

The Vote: Yes – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio
No – Jessica Andors
No – Patricia Mariano
No – Noemi Custodia-Lora
No – Ventura Rodriguez

MOTION FAILS

~~_____~~ The Vote: ~~_____~~ Yes – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio
Yes – Jessica Andors
No – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Noemi Custodia-Lora
No – Ventura Rodriguez

The members discussed the process for clarification, in order to continue collaboration and to give the Superintendent authority. Their main concern was the process to follow if the Superintendent does not approve the plan. Mayor Rivera recommended to add “under extreme circumstances” and Julia Silverio seconded. Superintendent Paris commented of her support for the process designed. Ms. Andors requested that the Board should discuss the steps the LAE would need to take if a review was necessary. Mayor Rivera suggested and Ms. Andors accepted an amendment that the process of review will be defined within two months. Dr. Rodriguez noted he understands the request for “extreme circumstances” but advocated not to include it in that it creates more pressure to define it as the Board; the notion of what “review” means is more important. Ms. Mariano suggested allowing the process to take place this year until and if an issue surfaces. Mayor Rivera noted the request to add “extreme circumstances” is if a concern arises of an open architecture at a school is not working. Based on Ms. Mariano’s support of the current recommendation, Ms. Andors adds that in doing this, the Board “as Receiver” will start the transition in bringing the control back to the district.

~~Upon the motion made by Julia Silverio, seconded by Mayor Dan Rivera it was~~

~~VOTED: To table the recommendation so the Board can fully consider and understand the process.~~

~~The Vote: Yes – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio
No – Jessica Anders
No – Patricia Mariano
No – Noemi Custodia Lora
No – Ventura Rodriguez~~

Commented [RV(3)]: This vote happened before the vote above about the school operational plans.

MOTION FAILS

Budget Meetings Update – Superintendent Paris provided the process and overview of the leadership/school budget meetings, such as school improvement plan highlights and what school operational plan entails with examples of staffing and budget locations. Member Pat Mariano participated at thirteen school meetings. Ms. Mariano commented that the leadership team was supportive of every school and principal and assisted in clarifying goals, budget, staffing and upcoming programs. The meetings ran smoothly which shows that the established guidelines provided to the schools were clear to follow. Superintendent Paris added there are a few schools who submitted proposals outside of the school operation plans' guidelines pertaining to professional development with strong rationales that are under consideration.

Adoption of Minutes

Upon the recommendation of the Acting Chair and motion made by Mayor Dan Rivera, seconded by Patricia Mariano, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the Regular Meeting minutes of the February 25, 2019 meeting.

Miscellaneous

Mayor Rivera noted that as the Chair of the School Committee, he is to inform the LAE Board that at their February 27, 2019 meeting, the School Committee voted for the LAE Board to consider that the School Committee can hold monthly meetings. At their November 28, 2018 meeting, the School Committee voted to request that the LAE Board establish joint subcommittees with the School Committee. Mayor Rivera will provide the Commissioners' related correspondence to them. He will encourage them to attend the LAE Board meetings and to attend the upcoming Budget Subcommittee meetings. The LAE members noted that they do not have jurisdiction to vote/approve their requests; it is the power of the Commissioner.

The LAE members discussed the schedule for the upcoming Budget Subcommittee meetings and the Budget Public Hearing.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 P.M.

John Connolly, Chair