

March 17, 2021

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A virtual meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board was held at 6:00 P.M. with the following members present: Dan Rivera, CEO/President Mass Development, Jessica Andors, Executive Director for Lawrence Community Works, Julia Silverio, Lawrence City Councilor and local business owner, Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee Member, Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, VP of NECC Lawrence Campus and Acting Chairman Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Associate Commission for statewide support DESE. Absent: Ashly Dominguez, Student Representative.

Also present was Superintendent Cynthia Paris and Joan Milone, Recording Secretary for this meeting.

The Acting Chair, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M, and noted in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order, the meeting is being held with all Board Members, District Staff and guests remotely. YouTube is streaming the meeting live. He held the Pledge of Allegiance. Public comment may be submitted via info@lawrenceallianceforeducation.org by 12 noon the day of the meeting to be included as public record.

Julia Silverio joined the meeting at 6:05 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance

Ventura welcomed everyone and noted that the LAE Board attended a professional training last week on March 10, 2021 with additional sessions in the next few months.

Superintendent's Report

- Leahy Project – Suresh Bhatia, Atlantic Construction & Management, Inc., Adolfo Cuevas and Dennis Daly of Mt. Vernon Group Architects, Inc., provided a presentation of the new Leahy School site plan (new school to be built on original school's site) describing each of the four floor's and roof's design plans as well as the outside design. The school will house K-8 classrooms (to include Leahy, Up Leonard and Lawlor School students) with a 1000 student capacity.

Ventura opened the discussion to the members' for questions and comments. Dan Rivera and Patricia Mariano noted that the Leahy and the Oliver projects will be expensive but are necessary for the City's students' education. Julia Silverio recommended possible discussions with the City to possibly update the area near the school on Erving Street. Suresh Bhatia provided the draft timeline with the possible MSBA approval in June with possible demolition in spring 2022.

- In-person return – Mary Toomey provided the update for the reopening of in-school learning for students (April 5 – Gr. K-5; April 28 - Gr. 6-8, proposed: May 3, Gr. 9 and May 4 – Gr. 19-12); optional waivers offered by DESE; parents’ choice in remote vs. in-school learning which was obtained through survey; results of a space feasibility study and the implemented safety protocols within the schools.

Members inquired on the simultaneous instruction in classrooms and zoom, the needed additional resources for teachers, the transportation process and the revised school-day schedule. Assistant Superintendent Toomey and Superintendent Paris responded to each members concern. They especially noted that each classroom is different, but the teachers are amazing in implementing the needed instruction artistically for their students by collaborating with other staff and peer-to-peer support. Dan Rivera suggested that the teachers be provided additional compensation for their extra work during Covid/Julia **agreed** noting that they as other professionals are fulfilling their role and responsibilities. Julia Silverio asked the Superintendent to provide the district efforts in order to bring the students back who are staying home due to work, etc. at the next meeting.

Dan Rivera left the meeting at 7:30 P.M.

Ventura Rodriguez requested for the record an update on how the facilities were prepared for the return. Superintendent Paris noted that CDI provided an extensive report on each of the districts’ buildings, which showed that each building has been prepared for safe in-school instruction. Maricel Goris noted that Human Resources is currently working on implementing an appropriate process for staff who do not want to return based on medical accommodations. Jess Andors requested full communication with all staff so families in turn will be informed; Superintendent Paris noted that communication procedures are being implemented. Jess asked for specific details at the next meeting. Julia Silverio recommended for consideration that no parent be provided an accommodation to take their child out of the district.

- Social Media Policy – Chris Markuns noted that the policy had no changes which was discussed at the February meeting.

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, a motion was made by Julia Silverio and seconded by Noemi Custodia Lora, it was

VOTED: To approve the Social Media Policy as submitted.

The Vote: Yes – Jessica Andors
 Yes - Noemi Custodia Lora
 Yes – Patricia Mariano
 Yes – Julia Silverio
 Yes – Ventura Rodriguez

- SY21-22 Calendar – Superintendent Paris noted the only change on the calendar was the name of Columbus Day to Indigenous Day.

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, a motion was made by Noemi Custodia Lora and seconded by Jessica Andors, it was

VOTED: To approve the SY21-22 Calendar as revised.

The Vote: Yes – Jessica Andors
 Yes - Noemi Custodia Lora
 Yes – Patricia Mariano
 Yes - Dan Rivera
 Yes – Julia Silverio
 Yes – Ventura Rodriguez

- School Choice – Superintendent Paris provided the overview of School Choice, which the Board would determine whether or not to allow LPS students to go out of district for their education. The district recommends to not participate in the school choice (not allow LPS students to go elsewhere as a Lawrence resident).

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, a motion was made by Patricia Mariano, seconded by Jessica Andors

Julia Silverio does not want to limit the LPS students to not be able to go to another district. Jess Andors and Patricia Mariano would not want to limit the students, but participating would take resources away from the remaining LPS students. Noemi Custodia Lora requested more information be provided for next year’s vote (how it would affect other districts). Ventura Rodriguez requested more research as well.

VOTED: To not participate in School Choice for the SY21-22.

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

- DCU Donation – Digital Federal Credit Union to Upper School Academy, \$20,000 donation, to be intended for senior students to apply for individual \$500 scholarships (Citizenship Award).

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, a motion was made by Julia Silverio and seconded by Jessica Andors, it was

VOTED: To accept the donation.

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

Other

- Minutes – LAE Board Meeting - February 10, 2021

Jessica Andors requested the minutes be revised to list her as absent; she did not attend.

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, a motion was made by Patricia Mariano and seconded by Noemi Custodia Lora, it was

VOTED: To approve the February 10, 2021 minutes as amended.

The Vote: Abstain – Jessica Andors
Yes – Noemi Custodia Lora
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Julia Silverio
Yes – Ventura Rodriguez

Adjournment

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, a motion was made by Julia Silverio and seconded by Noemi Custodia Lora, it was

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:14 pm.

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

Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Acting Chair