

May 26, 2020

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A virtual meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board was held at 4:00 P.M. with the following members present: Honorable Dan Rivera, Mayor of Lawrence, Julia Silverio, Lawrence City Councilor and local business owner, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Associate Commission for statewide support DESE, Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee Member, Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, VP of NECC Lawrence Campus and Chairman John Connolly, Executive Director of The 1647, Inc. Absent: Jessica Andors, Executive Director for Lawrence Community Works.

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

The Chair, John Connolly, called the meeting to order at 4:12 P.M

1. Pledge of Allegiance

John Connolly held the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

No public comment.

3. Superintendent's Report

School Closure/covid-19 Response Update - Superintendent Paris updated the Board noting that she and her leadership team continue to meet with the stakeholders. A task force will be implemented to support the district's operations for opening of school. A social/emotional task force has already been implemented to support students, parents, and the community needs in the coming months.

Mayor Rivera provided an update on the current City's statistics and response to Covid-19 following the State's regulations. There are 1000 tests per day but more testing is needed. City residents can be tested with a doctor's note. He recommends all who can to work from home.

Noemi Custodia-Lora joined the meeting at 4:17 PM.

Student Retention and Promotion Policy – Chair Connolly noted that the members have been briefed on this subject for the past two meeting. Superintendent Paris confirmed that the LPS team met with stakeholders, staff and parents who unanimously agreed with the revised policy. Currently, meetings are taking place with educators to determine how to create interventions and supports for students through the summer to move up to the next grade. Based on the crisis, it is not equitable to retain students and to suspend the current Student Retention and Promotion Policy.

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

VOTED: To temporarily suspend the Lawrence Public Schools Promotion and Retention Policies for the 2019-2020 school year.

Superintendent Paris noted that Boston Public Schools has followed this process. The policy will be applied across all school levels and is not specific to the MCAS. Ventura Rodriguez agrees that the policy will assist to assess students; DESE will provide guidance in June.

The Vote: Yes – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio
Absent – Jessica Andors
Yes – Ventura Rodriguez
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Noemi Custodia-Lora
Yes – Chair John Connolly

4. Report of the Chair

FY21 Proposed LPS Budget – Chair Connolly will poll the Subcommittee for a favorable recommendation prior to the vote of the full Board. He noted the favorable amount of the Budget to be \$216,084,236. Superintendent Paris noted it was a robust process with the assistance of staff. The budget was driven by priorities and needs of the district. With the uncertainty of the State and Local budget and is prepared to amend if necessary.

Chair Connolly and Mayor Rivera confirmed that this budget includes the proposed SOA funding and the Chapter 70 projection from the Governor’s budget to comply with the City’s law with the anticipation that it will need to be amended. Julia Silverio would have liked the SOA not be included as a separate breakdown and somewhat provides a false sense of available funding. Ventura Rodriguez commented that there is no concrete information that funding is not coming and recommended amending later if needed. Noemi Custodia-Lora inquired on a Plan B if funding is not approved; Superintendent Paris will come back to the Board with several scenarios.

Julia Silverio noted the SOA item still outstanding to hold conversations with parents and students. Chair Connolly noted that the SOA application will be on the June agenda.

Chair Connolly requested a poll of the Budget Subcommittee for a favorable recommendation for the proposed SY20-21 Budget in the amount of \$216,084,236.

Abstain – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio (with reservations fully noted)
Yes – Ventura Rodriguez
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Chair John Connolly

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

VOTED: To recommend the Lawrence Public Schools Budget for SY20-21
In the amount of \$216,084,236.

Chair Connolly thanked the Superintendent and her team, and Budget Subcommittee. He noted the difficulty to vote on a budget with a number that can change. This budget is a statement of their values putting the students and families first.

The Vote: Abstain – Mayor Dan Rivera
 Yes – Julia Silverio
 Absent – Jessica Andors
 Yes – Ventura Rodriguez
 Yes – Patricia Mariano
 Yes – Noemi Custodia-Lora
 Yes – Chair John Connolly

Student Opportunity Act - Chair Connolly noted there was no update.

5. Other Business

Chair Connolly held the approval for the April 29, 2020 Meeting minutes.

Patricia Mariano requested the Superintendent to provide the number of students who are remotely learning. She also suggested revising the Student Retention and Promotion Policy based on the last revision was completed in 2014.

Upon the recommendation of the Chair and motion made by Julia Silverio, seconded by Patricia Mariano, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 5:04 P.M.
 meeting.

John Connolly, Chair