

August 5, 2020

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board was held in the Parthum School's auditorium at 4:30 P.M. 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, 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.

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 4:50 P.M

1. Public Participation

No in-person comment. There were sixty emails sent to the LAE email account. These emails have been forwarded to all the LAE Board for their feedback and the comments will be added to the meeting minutes.

He noted that he has been appointed as Interim Chair for former Chair John Connolly who has resigned from the Board.

2. Superintendent's Report

School Calendar – Superintendent Paris explained that the due to Covid-19 the Commissioner extended the opening of school by 10 days for additional professional development for staff. Therefore, she requested the Board's approval for the revised calendar which reflected that new teachers will report on August 28, all staff to report on August 31, students to report on September 16 and the school year will end on June 22, 2021.

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, a motion was made by Mayor Dan Rivera, seconded by Jessica Andors, it was

VOTED: To accept the revised School Calendar as presented.

The Vote: Yes – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio
Yes – Jessica Andors
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Noemi Custodia-Lora
Yes – Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Acting Chair

Reopening Plan Presentation – Superintendent Paris presented the Draft Plan Overview. She noted the process was a collaborative effort between the LPS leadership team with teachers, families, students, principals and stakeholders... She presented a detailed overview of three draft models: in-person, hybrid and remote. Within the next 10 days, listening and forum sessions will be conducted to receive feedback from staff, students and families. She will provide this feedback in an update to the Board. With the Board’s approval, the final draft plan will be submitted to DESE within the next week.

Dr. Ventura opened the discussion to the Members. Jess Andors noted concerns such as: support and professional development for teachers in order to provide quality content for robust learning; the need to receive feedback from families and teachers after fall semester, are teachers willing to return. Noemi Custodia Lora inquired whether there would be a prepared transition plan if needed; are there transportations’ guidelines. Superintendent Paris noted the additional days added to the calendar allows for additional training for the teachers; the leadership team will be prepared in the need of a transition plan and the transportation/district work together for the safety of the students. Patricia Mariano noted that teachers are essential and should be working remotely from the classroom to provide the students a more real-life learning experience. Mayor Rivera noted concern with the hybrid model and the transportation plan, facilities’ punch list to meet the necessary guidelines, high need students’ ratio (remote vs in-person), nutritional services” plans. He suggested the plan should include testing and to comprise a budget with proposed costs of the necessary supplies. Julia Silverio noted her concern in the percentage of parents not wanting their students to return to school, devices for students, students’ attendance/engagement. Superintendent Paris reassured that students will have devices and there are expectations for student engagement based on teachers’ support and training. Superintendent Paris noted that the ongoing engagement surveys/listening forums with the stakeholders is for feedback on the fall plan. She added that the 1- days of teacher training will include attendance, schedules for lesson planning and grading. Dr. Rodriguez inquired and the Superintendent confirmed there will be partnering with other schools to research options such as professional development. Kinnon Foley provided him details pertaining to the process of the hybrid model including classroom platforms, district wide “Clever” login, and enrichment opportunities. Chris Merlino provided detailed information pertaining to the cleaning process of the district for the students’ health and safety. Masiel Sheets noted that the Chapter 70 funding and district budget allows for the needed operational materials/costs; the Cares Fund Act allows \$5.8 for equitable services.

Mayor Rivera requested information on a testing process, the budget costs and a facilities’ update be provided at the next meeting in anticipation for the vote.

Dr. Rodriguez noted that DESE extended the submission from August 10 until August 12. The LAE Board meeting is scheduled for August 12 at 6:00 PM.

3. Other

Jessica Andors recommended reopening the discussion for a Joint SC/LAE Meeting and requested it as an agenda item in the fall.

Patricia Mariano noted Anne Marie Stronach’s resignation after 27 years in the district.

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

VOTED: To enter Executive Session for contract negotiations at 7:28 P.M.

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

Upon the motion made by Julia Silverio, seconded by Patricia Mariano, it was

VOTED: To come out of Executive Session at 7:40 P.M.

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

Dr. Rodriguez noted that there were votes taken for the Paraprofessionals and SEIU contracts.

Upon the motion made by Julia Silverio, seconded by Noemi Custodia Lora, it was

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:42 P.M.

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

Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Acting Chair