

April 8, 2020

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: 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 Chairman John Connolly, Executive Director of The 1647, Inc. Absent: Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Associate Commission for statewide support DESE.

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 6:03 P.M

I. Pledge of Allegiance

John Connolly held the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Participation

The Chair read for the record the Public Participation, which was submitted through written comments via email (info@lawrenceallianceforeducation.org).

Dr. Marianela Rivera, table coordinator for the Greater Lawrence Education Justice Allegiance, wrote the concern in the cancellation of the March 25 School Committee meeting and the lack of communication between the LAE and the School Committee members. A community member has the right to School Committee representation. The Receivership has been silencing the elected representatives' voices, which is a violation of constitutional rights. The requested Joint meetings to discuss the Turnaround Plan and quarterly written TAP updates to School Committee members have not been upheld by law. She demanded that the elected School Committee Members be involved in these meetings and that the School Committee meetings be rescheduled ASAP.

Chair Connolly recommended that the item of School Closure/Remote Learning be added to the agenda for discussion.

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

VOTED: To add status of school closure and remote learning to the agenda.

Superintendent Paris provided an update related to the district's ongoing work to provide students with meals, continuing to contact students who have not received their laptops, and continued encouraged engagement with students and families on remote learning. The process is a new territory

to continue to collect data to continue to resolve issues (Comcast connection/Wi-Fi hot spots) as needed.

The LAE members noted their concern with the Wi-Fi connectivity and the monitoring of the students who have not been contacted as yet and requested an update at the next meeting.

The Chair noted that the LPS Closure Update and the City's Update on Covid-19 will be a consistent agenda item at forthcoming meetings.

Denise Snyder, Assistant Superintendent reviewed the LPS variance policy for the proposed amendment to the Variance Policy with legal counsel Angela Smagula with a PowerPoint presentation. The application for variance requests begins on May 1. The amendment will provide future equity for students attending school. The proposed amendment aligns expectations with the State's chronic absenteeism and is as follows:

5. The granting of a variance is privilege. As such, it can be revoked and students re-assigned to their neighborhood school at the end of any given marking period if:
 - a. A student's attendance in school falls below Massachusetts' definition of Chronic Absenteeism of at least 10% of days enrolled (e.g., 18 days absent if enrolled for 180)**
 - b. A student receives out of school suspension for a total of five or more cumulative days.

Attorney Smagula explained that under the Receivership law, the LAE Board can vote to approve both readings of policies at the same meeting.

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

VOTED: To approve the amendment to the Variance Policy as submitted.

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

Report of the Chair

Earned Autonomy Update – Chair Connolly noted that the process is on schedule for the approval vote in June 2020. CPRL will present their work completed to date; a draft of the framework will be provided at the May 2020 meeting with anticipation for the vote in June. Maddie Sims (CPRL) provided an overview of the process with a PowerPoint presentation, which included: Stakeholder Engagement Process, Key Insights, Theory of Action and their next steps. CPRL conducted 40+ meetings/interviews with stakeholders, which formed the key building block for the theory of action. She summarized the key factors for students, teachers/ staff, parents and principals. The theory of action plan is based on collaboration with Operations, Academic Experience, School Environment

and Family and Community Engagement and if all schools follow correctly, all students (including high need) will engage, grow, achieve and be prepared for success.

The members noted the thorough process implemented to receive the feedback and outcomes, how the theory of actions intersect with the SOA of goals. The Chair concluded in noting the thorough work performed by CPRL in capturing the direct opinions, pleased that family and community engagement is a top priority and on target for June approval. Ms. Sims will provide another update in May.

Mayor Rivera joined the meeting at 7:10 P.M. and provided an overview of the City's data in regard to the Covid-19 virus. He noted the uncertainty on how the economy will affect future City/LPS district plans.

Turnaround Plan Update – Chair Connolly recommended a vote based on the discussion at the March 31, 2020 meeting.

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

VOTED: To delay conducting student and family outreach for the Turnaround Plan stakeholder engagement process until late August 2020 to be completed before the LAE's regular meeting in November.

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

Student Opportunity Act - Chair Connolly noted that at the March 31 meeting, members requested an additional outreach to students and families. Since then, there have been multiple meetings between the LAE members, Superintendent, Chair, Central Office staff and Chair Connolly with DESE. Additional outreach is needed to present the best SOA application possible and a remote survey is not feasible based on students' resources, Covid-19 related issues, etc. The State Legislature acted noting the April 1 deadline was canceled and the DESE Commissioner will determine when the SOA deadline is due for each district. One option for the district is to petition DESE to extend the deadline until the October LAE meeting and to join the TAP stakeholder outreach in late August to present to LAE in October and submitted to DESE.

The Chair requested the members' feedback who noted concern on how the SOA extension effect the State funding on proposed plan items to be implemented in the early school year. The Superintendent does note the concern and possible implications.

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

VOTED: To request that DESE extend LPS's Student Opportunity Act application deadline until October 15 at the latest in order to conduct a more in-depth student and family outreach.

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

Superintendent's Review - Chair Connolly noted that there will be an update for Superintendent's Review at the May 8 meeting and materials will be provided to the members prior to that date.

Other Business

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

VOTED: To approve the March 11, 2020 Regular Meeting minutes as submitted.

Chair Connolly noted that there will be a virtual Budget Subcommittee meeting on April 13, 2020 at 4:00 PM to include himself, Patricia Mariano, Julia Silverio, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez and Mayor Rivera. All other LAE Members are welcome to listen virtually.

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

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:50 P.M. meeting.

John Connolly, Chair