

September 9, 2020

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A 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 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 6:10 P.M, and held the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Public Participation

The Chair noted that there was no in-person comment but the Public Comments submitted via the Lawrenceallianceforeducation.com will be provided to the Board Members and will be part of the meetings' minutes.

Superintendent's Report

Reopening Plan Update - Superintendent Paris opened by noting that she and her team have been busy with holding virtual meetings and holding professional development for teachers and staff. There will be revisited conversations especially on the assessment needs

Denise Snyder provided an update on the resources needed by students for remote learning. She reviewed all the district's methods to outreach to students' families and noted to date 71% of families have been contacted. . She noted that the enrollment has decreased by 300 students due to student transfers and fewer registrations. The data received from families have provided additional details on the students' needs and the outreach will continue in order to provide to their needs.

Jess Andors arrived at 6:18 P.M.

Mayor Rivera noted his concern with the decrease in the enrollment number based on students not signing in to attend class and that the States' funding based on student enrollment. Superintendent stated she shares his concerns and will continue to outreach to the pending students (waiting for vaccines, etc.) and additional new students. Julia Silverio requested a breakdown of the 300 students not enrolled by grade level and reason. Mayor Rivera accredited the LPS team covering the hotline. Ms. Snyder provided details on the investigation process to locate students who do not start remote learning on 9/16 /20. Ms. Andors expressed her concern in knowing that all the students will have access to a device to participate in the remote leaning.

Superintendent Paris confirmed that every student is ready to participate with a device. Dr. Rodriguez suggested that the Board Members assist in any way individual or collectively. Mayor Rivera reiterated that he and the City are available.

Superintendent Paris noted her appreciation of the teachers and staff's feedback but she urged the Members' attention to focus on the needs of the students and families. Their desire is to be in school to connect with their teachers.

Assistant Superintendent Maricel Goris presented the LPS Staff Leaves/Accommodations Options (Federal Guidelines for Employers) based on DESE's decision that teachers teach remotely from the classroom. She presented the number of requests for remote work as of 9/9/20, are reviewed, approved and/or options.

Julia Silverio commented that she does not think it is fair to penalize a teacher (take a leave without pay), who is willing to work from home but not in the classroom. Ms. Goris noted the federal guidelines present options to the staff; the district understands that staff have concerns. The accommodation options and process were provided to staff three weeks ago. Ms. Silverio disagrees with the percentages presented based on they are to the benefit of the school department. Superintendent Paris noted there has been no changes in the survey percentages. Ms. Silverio reiterated that teachers and families are still concerned in returning to in-school learning. Superintendent Paris stated she takes issue with the comment that the district has changed numbers, which is not true. Jess Andors asked "what is the district doing" for teachers who want to teach, but remotely from home and why can't they work from home with a reasonable request granted?" Superintendent Paris noted that the process needed to be equitable for all requests. Jess Andors requested the number of approved accommodations be provided to the Board.

Mayor Rivera provided an update for the City of Lawrence and Covid 19.

Jess Andors asked for clarification for the Reopening Plan and options for in-school learning for parents who have children and work. Dr. Rodriguez read the Reopening Plan's specific groups for in-person classes (which did not include this situation). Superintendent Paris stated she appealed to partners and organizations on this matter for additional childcare services. Mayor Rivera added that the Boys' Club is offering space for students to remote learn in an open space with supervision.

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

VOTED: To approve the May 26, 2020 Regular Minutes as submitted.

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

Yes – Ventura Rodriguez

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

VOTED: To approve the June 17, 2020 Regular Minutes as submitted.

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

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

VOTED: To approve the June 25, 2020 Executive Minutes as submitted.

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

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

VOTED: To approve the June 25, 2020 Regular Minutes as submitted.

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

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

VOTED: To approve the August 5, 2020 Executive Minutes as submitted.

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

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

VOTED: To approve the August 5, 2020 Regular Minutes as submitted.

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

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

VOTED: To approve the August 12, 2020 Executive Minutes as submitted.

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

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

VOTED: To approve the August 19, 2020 Regular Minutes as submitted.

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

Upon the recommendation of the Chair and a motion Mayor Dan Rivera, seconded by

Jessica Andors, it was

VOTED: To approve the September 2, 2020 Regular Minutes as submitted.

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

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

VOTED: To approve the August 12, 2020 Regular Minutes with the following amendments as discussed.

Julia Silverio stated that it was her understanding that she voted for full remote learning at the August 12 meeting - meaning that teachers could do their instruction from where they chose (home or classroom). There have been many emails from teachers and families noting their concern for teaching in the classrooms. She is concerned that the Board is mandating the teachers to teach from the classroom. She inquired what number of teachers are needed based on 20% of high needs students who need in-person instruction totaled 2582 students. Dr. Rodriguez questioned whether Ms. Silverio's discussion was to request an amendment to the minutes. Ms. Silverio's stated she wants the minutes to reflect that the members were voting for 100% remote teaching with the understanding teachers would be teaching from home. Dr. Rodriguez requested confirmation that she wanted an amendment to the minutes to reflect her understanding.

Jess Anders noted she thought she voted to start school remotely with up to 20% high need students returning with a staggered schedule without an obligation for teachers to teach from the classroom. She had received communications suggesting that the vote at the August 12 meeting was amended after the meeting. She remembered Patricia Mariano suggested that teaches teach from the classroom. There is an open question on the vote at that meeting. Jess Anders also requested that the minutes reflect that she accepted the plan with the understanding that it was suggested but not mandated fort teachers to teach from the classroom.

Noemi Custodia Lora also requested that the minutes reflect she understood that it would be fully remote for teachers and students.

Jess Anders requested to revisit the wording of the vote and when was the amendment for teachers teaching from the classroom added. Dr. Rodriguez noted that this information was in the presentation (link) provided to the members for that meeting.

Mayor Rivera left the table at 8:06 P.M.

Patricia Mariano added that she presented her recommendation on August 5 and it was included in the information provided to the members for the August 12 meeting.

Noemi Custodia Lora suggested that the video be reviewed to confirm what was discussed for vote. Dr. Rodriguez suggested the minutes be tabled based on the disagreement on the minutes. Julia Silverio disagreed.

Mayor Rivera returned to the table at 8:10 P.M.

Joan Milone repeated the members' requested amendments.

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

Julia Silverio, Jess Andors and Noemi Custodia Lora inquired based on this amendment would the process change. Dr. Rodriguez noted that the approved plan was be followed and staff are to request for accommodations if needed.

Julia Silverio claimed that the Board did not provide clarity from the vote. What is the plan for the teachers who do not want to teach from the classroom? Jess Andors explained that there is not a full consensus of the Board, but the district now understands their requests to encourage staff to request accommodations and that the district will be maximally flexible in responding to the requests. Julia Silverio requested it be on record that she is 100% against teachers returning to the classroom unless they choose to do so.

Upon the motion made by Julia Silverio, seconded by Jessica Andors, it was

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:20 P.M.

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

Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Acting Chair