

May 11, 2022

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A regular meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board was held at 6:00 P.M. with the following members present: Maria Moeller, CEO, The Community Group, Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee Member, Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, VP of NECC Lawrence Campus, and Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Chair. Julia Silverio, Lawrence local business owner, arrived at 6:10 P.M. and Jessica Andors, Executive Director for Lawrence Community Works arrived at 6:15 P.M. and Mayor Brian De Pena arrived at 6:20 P.M.

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

Chair, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M. He held the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Participation

- **H. Maali, Parent** 53 Chester Street, Lawrence, MA, all united for the Lawrence cafeteria workers, supporting them in their quest for higher salaries. Cynthia Paris leadership, who came to the city and faced the most difficult times such as the gas explosions and the pandemic moving forward. Demanding that under her leadership do not leave the cafeteria workers contracts.
- **Santina M. Turowski** (Sunny Ski) Teacher spoke on behalf of three people, expressing concerns on current wages, and how they have to work a second job to support their families. She added that current salaries are unsustainable, and that LPS needs to step up. Also questioned the leadership for the negotiations of teachers, and administrators
- **Jean Zembruski**, President of the Lawrence Administrators Association representing deans, supervisors, and assistant principals. Shared that in preparations for upcoming negotiations memberships were surveyed where 60% responded accepting extra responsibilities for sobbing, and tutoring without any complaint adding that they are also responsible for the everyday obligations such as observing classrooms, managing crisis, evaluations, and linking families for services needed. Ms. Zembruski added that any documented performance successes that the district realizes such as SQR visits, parent evaluations, student progress is a direct result of the staff working in the schools. Members are continuing to be encouraged by the parent support, they need to be adequately compensated, but, I'm not sure they guarantee to be here next school year.
- **Maria Encarnacion**, 311 Lowell St, Cafeteria worker for 16 years. Represented her colleagues with a problem that has been affecting them for years; that is the salary they had been getting which is the minimum wage asking to be compensated to \$20.00 an hour.
- **Jenny Vaez**, Cafeteria worker at the LHS for two years with a salary of \$13.52 per hour. Adding that she feels discriminated against and punished because their salary always

remains the same despite the cost of living; concluding that they don't know to whom they speak because the responsibility is placed on one another.

- **Lennin Roa**, School Committee Member, and parent, 36 Columbus Ave. Expressed being scared of sending his child to the LHS with all the fights and the bullying. Begging to keep it together so that this doesn't happen. Also asked to support the cafeteria workers, teachers who are leaving and begging for better pay and other things happening, they need to get something to feel appreciated.
- **Jovanny Rodriguez**, City Council representing district D, 32 Gallop street. Spoke about being the chair of the public safety committee for which he had invited the superintendent to attend the meetings asking her to attend the public safety committee; Also talked about the appointment of the receivership person and the disconnection between the receivership law allows the receiver to do and the school committee. The constituent part has not been fulfilled. Concluding with the situation of the cafeteria workers and the need to do the right thing for them.
- **Mangel Feliz**, Cafeteria worker. Representing workers at the cafeteria. Pointed out that in addition to working in the kitchen, he also works storing the food; we also have to clean the floors and take the trash out. We earned the minimum wage for Lawrence; invited the board to come to their areas of work; calling their good conscience and to think if this is right.
- **Ana Sanchez**, Cafeteria worker. Talked about the protest calling out to Cynthia and their union representatives so they can meet. Explaining that they don't know where to go; as the union said it is the Superintendent asking to respond to their necessities; requesting a meeting with all the cafeteria workers so this can be clarified.
- **Jeovanny Trinidad**, Cafeteria worker. Asked that they be taken seriously since they have been protesting for three weeks to see who will listen so that we can have a better quality of life. Explained that she has been working in the LPS for five years and her salary is \$13.82 per hour which is not enough for basic needs.
- **Claudia Chavez**, Cafeteria worker. Explained that she feels that you did not value all their efforts especially during the pandemic risking getting sick; concluding that she loves her job, but what they are getting paid is not enough.
- **Ransays Gonzalez**, Cafeteria worker. Explained that she has been working for fourteen years and her salary is \$14.59 per hour. asking to listen to their voices and the need for a salary increase with or without receivership.
- **Sabina Gomez**, 215 Osgood St, Cafeteria worker expressed that she has been working for twenty years and earns \$14.65 per hour.
- **Gregory del Rosario**, City councilor representing district C. read an email from a teacher, asking to remove Cynthia Paris as a superintendent and her intention on leaving LPS.. Asking Cynthia to resign.
- **Fiordaliza Martinez**, Cafeteria worker. Asked the board to be mindful of the work cafeteria workers perform; demanding where it is that they have to go since they have been protesting for two weeks in front of the main office building.
- **Arelis Pujol**, Cafeteria worker. Expressed that she has been working for nineteen years and her salary is \$14.65 per hour; added that she has been protesting in front of the main office for two weeks

- **Maria Gadea**, Cafeteria worker. Expressed that it is not only to prepare the meals, go outside the kitchen to clean tables, also do the computer system to keep track and also check for the children who are allergic. Added that she has been working for six year earning and is only earning \$13.92 per hour. Concluded extending an invitation to the superintendent to go to the kitchen and observe the way they work.
- **Pavel Payano**, City Council at large representative. expressed that he came to speak about communication, and the support of men and women who serve as cafeteria workers. Expressed his frustration in listening to people begging for a fear wage knowing how high the rent in Lawrence is, the cost of car insurance, food etc. Also expressed his hope to the board on ensuring compromise and equity. Mr. Payano also added that the department heads who work for the city meet with the public safety committee to ensure that lines of communications are open.

Chair Rodriguez thanked everyone for coming and presenting the opinions and concerns.

Superintendent's Report

LPS Happenings – Superintendent Paris provided a video of the Unified Games that were held on May 10, 2022 at the LHS Stadium for all special LPS athletes. She recognized New Balance for sponsoring the event.

SQR – Superintendent Paris provided an update on the Spring 2022 School Quality Review (a process that enables an expert “outside” team to assess the work of a school or program based on a set of benchmarks associated with high-performance and organizational design and execution. and presented results for Emerging Focal Areas and Emerging Strengths.

Jessica Andors left at 7:15 P.M.

Superintendent Paris noted that she will provide updated information at the next monthly meeting.

School Choice SY23 - Under the Education Reform Act of 1993, School Committees are required to hold a Public Hearing on the issue of the School District’s participation in the Massachusetts School Choice Program.

Chair Rodriguez noted that the district has not participated in the past. Superintendent Paris recommended not to participate.

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

VOTED: To not participate in School Choice for the SY22-23.

The Vote: Yes – Mayor Brian De Pena

Yes – Noemi Custodia Lora
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Maria Moeller
No – Julia Silverio
Yes – Ventura Rodriguez, Chair

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, Ventura Rodriguez, with a motion made by Patricia Mariano, seconded by Julia Silverio, it was

VOTED: To enter the Executive Session at 7:27 P.M. for the purpose to review/discuss collective bargaining agreements

The Vote: Yes – Mayor Brian De Pena
Yes – Noemi Custodia Lora
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Maria Moeller
No – Julia Silverio
Yes – Ventura Rodriguez, Chair

Ventura Rodriguez, Chair