

Providence School Department
797 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903

Regular School Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 (6:00pm)

1.0 Convene Meeting

1.1 Call to Order- Meeting Called to Order by President Erlin Rogel at 6:10 PM
(Providence School Full Board Meeting 11-15-2023 was live streamed on Youtube.com/providenceschoolboard 11/15/23 6:00PM

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance: Recited

1.3 Roll Call: Toni Akin arrived at 6:15 PM; Carolina Roberts-Santana was absent. There was a quorum.

1.4 Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent was excited to share the news of the district hosting the School Choice Fair. This fair is for families of fifth and eighth graders to learn about the schools and make informed decisions about their school choice, also incoming Pre-K and Kindergarten families to learn about PPSD elementary schools. School Choice forms are to go out in January for 2024. Career & Technical Education Applications in January as well. There are over 20 CTE programs across the district in schools. CTE is also going to be at the School Choice Fair for families to learn of these programs. Five redesign schools that will be transformed in 2024-2025 school year.

Mount Pleasant Academy will focus on College and Career Readiness.

Hope High School will focus on Project Based Learning with an emphasis on Visual and Performing Arts.

JSEC will be Life Science and Technology

Alvarez High School Health Care and Finance Career

Delsesto Middle School Steam Academy with a robust SEL Support Program Center on Science Technology, Engineering, Art and Math.

Other areas of discussion will be School Safety Policy and RICAS test scores with PPSD doing better in Math and outperforming the urban rings.

Office of Equity & Belonging hosted their Respect Leadership Conference last month, this programs brings together middle and high school students who were selected by school leaders to represent their peers, creation of projects, action plans and force equity within their school community.

Mount Pleasant Soccer team won the division 4 for the first time since the program has started in 1970.

Delsesto Middle School Boys Soccer team won and crowned the Middle School Boys Soccer Playoff Champions

Nathan Bishop Middle School Girls won Cross Country Championship

Nathaniel Greene Middle School won Boys Cross Country Championship

School Board President would like to commemorate some of these sports teams

2.0 Approve Agenda

Approval of the Agenda

Recommendation to approve agenda as presented

Moved Travis Escobar, seconded by George Matouk (6-0) Motion Approved

3.0 Consent Agenda

3.1 Approval of Minutes- October 18, 2023

3.2 Senior School District Administrator Hiring

Sending to the Finance Committee for December

3.3 Resolution Establishment of the AI Taskforce

Discussion by Vice President Travis Escobar regarding the Resolution that he proposed in regards to students using AI to complete school work. Providence will be the first district to convene and talk about how this impacts our education and how to enhance learning with students using AI. **All were in favor except Ty'Relle Stephens who voted to abstain his vote**

3.4 Resolution to Ban Assault Rifles in RI

Discussion by Vice President Travis Escobar for the Resolution to Ban Assault Rifles, all are aware of assault rifles have done to the country, what has happened in various school shootings. He wanted to put something out requesting the state of RI to consider and pass legislation banning the sales of this weapon in regards to school safety. **All members were in favor except Night Jean Muhingabo who refused.**

4.0 Public Comment- Right to be heard

4.1 Sheila Conway PPSD Library Media Specialist. Ms. Conway spoke in regards to her school Library being closed since the beginning of June because of renovations. Six other schools were in phase one that were set up for renovations have been closed since April, some have been worked on but many are still closed because of the unpacking of books. Furthermore, students not utilizing Libraries due to poor planning of renovations for school. Submitted a written statement and to be given to the board.

5.0 School Board Member Comments- Open floor for all board members

5.1 School Board Comments

Night Jean Muhingabo addressed the lack of communication from leadership. He referenced how the district misled the board into approving the ABM Facilities Contract and secret payment of \$3.2 million dollars. He claimed that President Rogel had secretly said that the board knew of the early termination fees and he didn't know and wanted to know more about it. He urged for the Board President to communicate or set up meetings to discuss the contract and secret payment. That was why he and fellow board member sent a letter to the Attorney General Office and FBI for an investigation.

Referencing the incident with a student at Mount Pleasant High School, although he learned about it on the news he reached out to the Superintendent's Office, explanation of what occurred was given but he was still in fact disappointed that the Board didn't receive any communication from the Board President.

He ended his comments with the recent proposal of from the policy committee that Travis Escobar proposed regarding School Board Code of Conduct. He feels as though it is an attempt to silence and remove young board members. He feels that this policy is a waste of time.

President Erlin Rogel agreed that sometimes information is shared but doesn't always get out fast enough expressed that most on the board have full-time jobs and in some way sometimes not being able to respond.

Ty'Relle Stephens visited PCTA and Newcomer Academy, seen that there is great CTE work taking place. Slight issue with spacing. Thanked the Equity Office for doing amazing work and touched upon Esser Funding is running out and wants to make sure that at least staff is being funded or displacing anyone in the Equity Office. After meeting with Chairwoman Roberts-Santana the air was cleared and plans on attending more policy committee meetings. Turning his focus to the new Code of Conduct Policy proposed by Travis Escobar he feels like it is a slap in the face and this geared towards certain people on the board which is a concern. Last board meeting he felt as though there was a misrepresentation of himself towards understanding whenever he gets into a situation involving back and forth whether male or female he tends to raise his voice that it was geared as though he was attacking a female, finds it concerning that the board would go that route of saying that it's definitely a misrepresentation of who he is and it wasn't best to address last meeting. Also, addressing President Rogel's lack of communication and approach is perceived to be divisive manipulative concerning that he feels that not all board members are receiving the communications. Lastly, speaking to Travis Escobar's proposal is limit voices and young adults. He feels that there are policies that are outdated needing revision instead of trying to create this code of conduct. He also feels that is a motive to remove him from the board and also a tactic for Travis to become the president.

Travis Escobar addressed how tonight's agenda was a productive meeting. He discussed his reasoning(s) for the resolutions and policies that are proposed on tonight's agenda. He expressed that he is uncertain of his return after his term is over. He urged other members to join him in getting the work done and being productive.

George Matouk address the behavior of Mr. Stephens on the night that he and fellow board member Carolina Roberts-Santana had an exchange of words, he feels that the board should be balanced from a gender point of view with more female representation. He contradicted what Mr. Stephens said about the board leadership and voiced that certainly all are entitled to their own opinions.

Ty'Relle Stephens spoke again regarding Mr. Matouk's comments regarding his experiences on the board leadership as it applies to the different experiences that they both experience and the comments of him attacking females is wrong. He refers to Mr. Escobar's intentions on the School Board Code of Conduct that discussed or presented in the manner in which he spoke on it tonight, he feels that it was not genuine but geared towards individuals with motives.

Night Jean Muhingabo explained why he voted no on the Resolution on Assault Rifles and voiced ways to help by joining or helping with the Health & Wellness Committee instead of insulting other board members.

Travis Escobar spoke in response to Mr. Muhingabo's opinion on the assault rifles, he would be happy to continue the conversation(s) off record.

Erlin Rogel had the last comments, he expressed how vitally important to fully understand what the roles of the School Board members are supposed to be doing.

6.0 School Board Committee Updates

6.1 Policy Committee

Carolina Roberts-Santana was absent tonight, on her behalf Travis Escobar gave updates on the first reads on the Student Incident Communication policy, CTE Admissions and CTE Work Based Learning Policies.

Toni Akin was impressed with the Policy Committee Overview Report provided by Chairwoman Roberts-Santana. She reported on her visit to Kennedy Plaza. she was impressed with what she seen.

6.2 Finance Committee

Chairman Ibiyemi reported out on two contracts that were discussed and now to be voted on later this evening and addition to these contracts, there was an important discussion and presentation provided by Mr. Zachary Scott and Christopher Petisce. The discussion was on the future of district funding of programs and alternatives. He voiced how this is challenging and scary of programs not being funded.

President Rogel asked for a Finance oriented meeting for December.

6.3 Health & Wellness Committee

Chairman Muhingabo reported out on progress of the Health & Wellness Committee meeting that last held in September. He is looking to increase more teachers, students and counselors for participation in joining sub committees. Also, working with students at Central High School to set up a workshop and promote Mental Health Awareness Month next year.

President Rogel suggested on taking the meetings to some of the newer buildings.

6.4 Career and Technical Education Committee (CTE)

Travis Escobar reported on the CTE Committee, two policies are going to be for the first read tonight along with some other updates as well. CTE Committee had a large presence at the Junior Achievement Inspired Career Fair that was held for two days. Eighth grade applications are due on January 12th.

Highlights

Six PPSD students at the midterm point at New England Tech with majors in Auto, HVAC and Med Tech

Students from Central and Mount Pleasant completed their evening boat for Next Gen programs and have been introduced to six trades at New England Tech.

Congratulations to Brett Dickens and her team on the new data tracker that shows enrollments, work-based learning, internship hours and credentials.

Ultimate end goal for CTE Committee is to create strategic plan to present a case to stakeholders and elected officials about investing more into CTE and talks for what next five years would be.

6.5 School Building Committee Update

George Matouk reported on the last School Building Committee meeting that took place at Spaziano Elementary School, thanked fellow board members for their support. Spaziano school is nearly complete with still a punch list of cosmetic and other finishing items. Stage two projects awaiting comments from RIDE include the plan for Mount Pleasant and the construction of two new Pre-K-8 schools. (Asa Messar @West Broadway, Alfred Lima, Gilbert Stuart and Mary Fogarty) Demolition would begin at the end of the 2023-2024 school year and new Pre-K-8 at Mary Fogarty for school year 2026-2027. Lastly, discussion for last month's public comment section on the Newcomer Academy and PCTA sharing of learning space, the School Building Committee is solely there for consultation and approval of capital projects and not specifically related to the issues that came up in the last meetings as far as an oversight of those issues.

7.0 Review of Homeschool Candidates-

Marc Catone presented for the Homeschool Candidates

Moved Ty'Relle Stephens, seconded George Matouk by (7-0) Motion approved

8.0 Policy and Planning- School Board 1st reading for CTE Admissions, CTE Work Based Learning Policy and Student Incident Communication Policy. All Policies were voted on and passed for the 2nd read at the December School Board Meeting.

8.1 CTE Admissions (1st Read)

Moved by Ty'Relle Stephens, seconded by Travis Escobar (7-0) Motion Approved

8.2 CTE Work Based Learning Policy (1st Read)

Moved by Ty'Relle Stephens, seconded Toni Akin (7-0) Motion Approved

8.3 Student Incident Communication Policy (1st Read)

Moved by Ty'Relle Stephens, seconded Travis Escobar (7-0) Motion Approved

9.0 Report on Contracts

9.1 TNTP Inc. - Moved Ty'Relle Stephens, seconded by Toni Akin (7-0) Motion Approved

9.2 Thru Consulting, LLC - Moved Ty'Relle Stephens, seconded by George Matouk (7-0) Motion Approved

10.0 Presentation- Efficient District Systems: Professional Development

Presentation presented by Colene Van Brunt, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and Carina Pinto Chief of family and Community Engagement.

Colene Van Brunt shared the most recent RICAS Assessment Data.

Carina Pinto shared the impact of Attendance and Social Performance.

11.0 Adjourn

12.1 Adjourn Meeting- Meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM

Moved Ty'Relle Stephens, seconded by Toni Akin, (7-0) Motion Approved

Next Health & Wellness Committee Meeting is November 29, 2023