

CITY OF HOLYOKE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

LOCAL CONTROL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2024

TIME: 5:07 PM

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Local Control sub-committee Chair Yadilette Rivera Colón called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and announced that pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, attendees are hereby informed that a video and audio recording is being made of the meeting and the meeting is being live-streamed via zoom.

Present: Ms. Brunelle, Dr. Caballero-Roca, Dr. Rivera Colón

Also in attendance : Acting Commissioner Russel Johnston, Also from DESE Ms. Woo, Mr. Wheilhan, Mr. Collamore, Ms. Tensley -Williams, Mayor Garcia, Mr. Soto.

**Item #1** - [Holyoke Public Schools School Committee Capacity Building](#)- Budget section

- Maintain an established budget subcommittee.
- Motion to suspend the rules and allow Mr. Wheilhan to speak at this Meeting.
- Ms. Brunelle sets the motion. Dr. Caballero-Roca seconds that motion. Motion passed unanimously allowing John Whelihan to join.
- One of the Points brought up in the committee Capacity Building Document, ways to maintain and establish a budget subcommittee? The Holyoke school committee has a Finance and Operations subcommittee already up and running.
- John Wheilhan is the chairman of the Finance and Operations subcommittee. Joined to give an overview. Has met with Sean Mangano( Director of Finance) and Mr. Soto for current budget figures and how they relate throughout the district. Including Operations to get a firmer viewpoint of the needs of the school system . Finance and Operations growth and improvement in the school buildings. They're cutting staff programs in nearby districts , Holyoke public schools are not in that situation, HPS is in a better place. The goal is to maintain that going forward.
- Dr. Rivera Colón opens the floor for questions.
- Dr. Caballero-Roca asked, how do they envision to make the budget sustainable and continue not just this year but for years to come funding and

keep reallocating and keeping this?

- Mr. Whelihan says that the goal is to be prepared. Finance Director currently putting together a 5 year school budget outlook. Looking forward to the benefit of having a good team in place Mr. Soto and Sean Managano are both specialists when it comes to financial analysis and budget awareness.
- Ms. Brunelle adds most of it comes down to lobbying gift money through the state. MASC adjusted the Chapter 70 inflation index to a full cap of 4.5 percent. The School Committee has to make sure that the legislature is properly funding education. A need to fully fund the student Opportunity Act. and the Special Circuit breaker. Pushing for a 100 dollar per pupil minimum increment as a base number for future years. Mr. Whelihan's point is to hire people who do plan ahead of future Funding plans properly ahead of time for the Student opportunity Act. That way HPS is not funding positions that we couldn't afford for the long term.
  - Collaborate with HPS administration to prepare and recommend the annual budget to the Receiver for approval.
- Subcommittee members participate in school/district operational planning meetings.
  - Dr. Rivera Colón emphasized this is also something the school committee already does. They get the information and they get to see the budget calendar. Although not a functioning body they do vote to recommend things to the state.
- Conduct budget presentations and discussions at the subcommittee and full committee levels.
  - The Holyoke School committee already conducts these practices.
- Vote to recommend the annual budget to the Receiver.
  - Not something the subcommittee gets to vote on but they do receive information and discuss it as the meetings go along. Often times if there is something to discuss further they do or the school committee requests more information whenever needed.
- Engage the HPS administration in discussions of quarterly budget updates.
  - Dr. Rivera Colón states this happens regularly, if not quarterly, monthly. Depending when the Finance committee meets. Dr, Rivera Colón we have been doing.
  - Recommend to the Receiver budget transfers as necessary. This is not in place this is a new recommendation we would have to figure out the process for that
- Review warrants and payroll with the Receiver.

- Dr. Rivera Colón expressed that this is not in place yet. This is a new recommendation we would have to figure out the process for. Revise the protocol or procedure for reviewing warrants in the past.

- Prior financial committee members took turns going down to the central office to sign the warrants. This is something we can put together and plan a schedule and assign who signs the warrants. there is a Provision law where the committee can adopt it.
- Dr. Rivera Colón explains this is something that has not been in place but the warrants are available to view if anyone would like to review them it is an option that was always available to us.

- Assign a representative to observe collective bargaining.

-Dr. Rivera Colón states this has not been in place. This is something that has to be discussed by the full body in order to express how we go about .

- Ms. Brunelle requested from Commissioner Johnston that the subcommittee is looking for how they will work moving forward. Things are working now but we can discuss bringing forward. Help the subcommittee with outlining how to work moving forward with local control. Some things we are doing now would be as an example decentralizing the budget process. Especially in a unique district like ours where different buildings have differences to offer. Start to plan meetings with the finance department ahead of budget season . Art and music funding provide a well rounded day for the students . In regard to assigning a representative to Collective Bargaining this is something a good idea to implement now. So we can be prepared out of receivership. This is what we can prepare . - Budget transfers discussed a figure they will need to come to get larger transfers approved. Best engage financial decisions when they come up .
- Mr. Whelihan agrees. Become an oversight authority kept in the loop of finances. Longer range planning. Sometimes with the state promising a city in funding we have to readjust. In terms of funding expected versus actually received.
- Ms. Brunelle adds that Capital Planning, School projects should be funded properly. School buildings belong to the city. Critical to focus more on HPS infrastructure. Renamed the Finance committee to Finance and Operations, this will incorporate the school itself not only the day to day funding to a school.
- Dr. Rivera Colón highlighted where the school committee has been involved. Just a generous overview of a matter of record that the school committee has been involved in budgets and the school committee will continue to do so moving forward.

**Item #2** - Discussion on next steps for capacity building around budget.

- Utilize resources available through MASC. is there anything else the State Commissioner would like us to do ?
- Russel Johnston. great to hear working off the same list. Taking action or realizing what decisions they need to make decisions. Small Technical things that remain left to do or approve or assign. Capture what is already being done. Practice of procedures. public information specific actions that the school committee needs to take. Very much on a solid track.
  - We are beginning to draft what the components of the Local Control plan will be. Identify a timeline small example Signing of warrants. Individual or Quorum. The worry is that if we don't go too far we might forget . DESI can draft the plan and have it be open for feedback. So we develop the plan during all the meetings .
  - Dr. Rivera Colón has started a draft and will present to the full school committee if you have on on your end we can merge together and a Dr. Rivera Colón has a google doc to outline what will be covered.
  - Mr. Johnston appreciates covering the essentials. Annual budget guidelines and priorities investing in the students. 2024-2025 School Year. These items are on going, 2026 Budget? When will we have those discussions?
- Dr. Rivera Colón also ties back to everything in the Strategic plans that aligns with our Turn Around Plan.
- Ms. Brunelle , if you reference the December of this coming year overview of the , already establishing individual meetings with the Subcommittee .
- Mr. Whelihan the key take-away of this meeting tonight is proper planning whether it be a 1 year, 5 year, or 10 year plan. Lets just be prepared for the present future and what is yet to come. Do we have to re-adjust and pivot our plans based on funding? We can learn from the errors of the surrounding committees and town councils. Proper planning and expertise from the district acting commissioner.
  - Mr. Johnston mentions the narrative of the state promising funding. A lot of funding is available. There were concerns where the state funding did not follow through. Holyoke Public Schools should build a lot of sustainability referring to others if there is ever a concern please reach out to the state. Desire to be able to fund priorities for Holyoke. We have been very committed to the district financially. Drilling down on School base funding decisions going

beyond the checklist. We note as a follow up item the school committee review; deadlines for school improvement plans, inform budget conversations and performance management framework.

- Name that those are all encouraging aspects. The state is glad to be part of that as well.

**Item #3** - Approval of [minutes of 3-25-2024](#) meeting.

Dr. Rivera Colón , asked to set a motion to approve Local Control Meeting minutes of 3-25-2024.

- Ms. Brunelle on the motion is to approve those minutes of 3-25-2024.
- Seconded by Dr. Caballero-Roca,
- All in favor, motion passes unanimously.

Motion to Adjourned set by Ms, Brunelle second by Dr. Caballero-Roca,

Meeting Adjourned. 5:53 p. m.