

CITY OF HOLYOKE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

LOCAL CONTROL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 28TH, 2024

TIME: 5:03 PM

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dr. Rivera Colón called the Local Control Subcommittee meeting to order at 5:11 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: Mayor Garcia, Mr. Romero , Dr. Rivera Colón , Dr. Caballero-Roca

New Business

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

The Holyoke Public school district and Holyoke School Committee is already community based on collaboration. Topics that we should make sure are being accomplished and delivered.

- Establish a culture of collaboration:
 - Ensure that members develop and sustain a collaborative working relationship with each other and with the superintendent.
 - Actively create opportunities to engage stakeholders in working together to improve student outcomes.
 - Promote positive working relationships between district and municipal leaders.
 - Provide opportunities for students to share meaningful input into policies and decision-making as appropriate.
- Gathering input from stakeholders
 - To inform the plan, the working group members will seek additional input from community stakeholders (i.e., students, families, staff, external partners, etc.). The work of the working group will be presented regularly to the full HSC through the HSC Local Control Subcommittee.
 - Memo from [Holyoke Public Schools on stakeholder](#) engagement.

- Dr. Rivera Colón spoke with Superintendent Soto, in preparation for this meeting, regarding the Memo from [Holyoke Public Schools on stakeholder](#) which is linked to today's meeting agenda. We currently have a playbook that engages the community and informs decision making in the district. There are many different ways Holyoke Public Schools engage with the public. Our F.A.C.E. (Families and Community Engagement) Team. There is a F.A.C.E. team member at every school. Surveys will be established but they are done routinely and done well. In order to inform how and what can be happening in the culture as well as the decision making process. Also we have many partnerships that include colleges, mental health partnerships, and community based organizations.

Advisory Groups are also set in place. Many of these include teachers, students, parents and any other stakeholders that are included in conversation for the decision making process. We try our best for family involvement and community engagement. There is always room for improvement. Established turn around plan entry plan Fall 2021 , Middle grades Planning Fall 2021, Strategic Planning Spring of 2022 and 2023, Rezoning which was a big project that impacted a lot of people. There was a lot of outreach in this process. Also teacher retention in winter 2023-2024 to spring 2024.

Motion made by Dr. Rivera-Colón and seconded by Mayor Garica to suspend the rules to allow Superintendent Soto to speak and partake in this Local Control Meeting .

Motion passes

- Superintendent Soto expressed the district has focused on since the beginning of his receivership, coming up with creative ways for community engagement. Something that stuck with him as true the hardest part of local government is engagement. You can tell by voter turnout from big events. We have done extensive work to continue to grow that effort. Added a Family Engagement coordinator in every single school. Provided a lot more Language Access than we ever had before. Not everything communicated back then was translated. This has an impact on the family. Aware of the community needs. In person virtual; different ways. In doing so we learn something new every time we have a major effort. Parent Groups Systems are not in a form of a plan hopefully post receivership this committee embraces those efforts and builds upon them.
- Dr. Rivera Colón turns the floor for feedback from Commissioner Johnston.

- Commissioner Johnston appreciates the district has very much engagement in both parties. Look into what it looks like for the Transition plans. What does this look like for the transition plan? Voices are heard and the future can be seen. Community should feel involved. Believed to mention a working group and how they would get there.
- Dr. Rivera Colón raised the questions of what the working groups are going to look like? Plan a timeline in order for this to happen. Collect their thoughts. The school committee is very present in putting this working group together . When we got the Opportunity all the different stakeholders staff teachers like to Replicate in a sense. Not the same. We have the mechanism to recruit from different groups. Also a networking event, Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative ran by Ed Caisse. Non Profits organizations to help acquire outreach to the community of Holyoke. Another resource at our side in order to have all stakeholders involved in order to do this. There is an outline plan book. We will be able to start this very soon.
- Mayor Garcia agrees the School committee has a framework that can replicate. When we get to August on a Transitions plan, the Commissioners question How will we see that rollout, that level of collaboration in this transition and how will we make that fit?
- Superintendent Soto asked for clarification from Commissioner Johnston. Are you seeking community input on this plan before August ?
- Commissioner Johnston said yes that would be vital to have key involved individuals and all stakeholders involved.
- Superintendent Soto has not been a part of the plan until now but can be easily implemented. We can certainly come up with a timeline. What we did with rezoning and how it can be applied here. Seeking Community Input before August. Superintendent Soto once we can solidify the guiding questions we can host a Community retreat, one can be held virtually nad one will be held in person. Figuring out what that timeline can look like. The first step is what are those input sessions. We want to be structured by collecting data. Putting out a survey is another great tool to get feedback from the community.
- Dr. Rivera Colón stated we have been under receivership for so long the community might have forgotten what it is like to be in local control. Developing the survey is important. Having In person and Virtual so we can engage as many people as possible. In order to help people understand how important their feedback is.
- Commissioner Johnston adds to the question Superintendent Soto asked : What

are the questions we want to ask? Focus a lot on the role of the school committee. Those are areas that we don't need as much . In the future. Don't want to lose sight moving forward. Early College expanded preschool seats early childhood, High School Restructure. A lot of pieces the district has put in place. Turn around plans help ensure that we preserve or adapt for the future. Through this engagement put a lot of different ideas on the table . Working group that is developed now and then during the formation . Get feedback on it. Balance what is manageable and get information that we can use. One idea to put on the table: getting surveys out and creating those community event meetings across Holyoke.

- Dr. Rivera Colón adds the committee should come up with meaningful questions for our stakeholders. We need to adjust before we roll this out. As well as the survey finalized.
- Mayor Garcia acknowledged it's going to be a challenge as we are near the end of the school year. How likely can we get so many people that want to share an input over the summer. Present to the community a menu of different things that have taken place. Somehow in a scale kind of survey Rate how the community felt on these types of changes. Opportunity for folks to voice what is in their mind as we go forward with this transition.
- Superintendent Soto affirmed summer is a harder time to engage in family vacations and other things. The input effort that closely aligns with this is our Strategic Plan and Turnaround plan. We can use this as a framework just like Commissioner Johnston suggested. Getting into that is going to be a great starting point for what we want to get input on.
- Mayor Garcia, that is the survey part we still need to develop our working group. At what point do we want to get the working group added to this body?
- Mayor Garcia added we need to make sure the committee helps us engage those that are not at the table. When we do the survey they will be particularly helpful . We need to come forward with some sort of option we can take apart and move forward with this option.
- Commissioner Johnston agrees we all agree on a thoughtful engagement process. Working group plan for the survey does not need to be elaborate in terms of composition. How many People better that we all lay eyes on it to improve. Maybe we feel under-represented here.
- Dr. Riviera Colón adds we also have a variety of parents advisory groups. In many places we can recruit people who can come here and engage. All the time so it won't be as difficult as we assumed. Other things in the district. Drafted

recruitment email that we can utilize in order to recruit people right away. Any other things that are missing and we can discuss today ?

- Superintendent Soto thinks that since we are already in June, we don't have to make the decision on this if we are really committed to getting feedback. Decent amount of input. When the plan comes out we will continue with ongoing feedback even when the plan is in place.
- Mayor Garcia this plan that is being drafted states we include a working group in this transition that we solicit feedback community engagement. It has language that we establish committing the school board and culture of collaboration. Focus groups, process, implementation process already in play. Instead of us racing to get that level of feedback. The school committee has the implementation of the plan. One of the benchmarks . Engage with the public. .
- Dr. Rivera Colón warns us to be mindful of the timing. One of the things often said is when do we devalue if this was working to see where people are in our community.
- Mayor Garcia suggested we schedule a hearing retreat in August 2024. Draft a plan after a couple of hearings and get that feedback and document. Our commitment needs to be that we are implementing this together with the Community.
- Superintendent Soto, acknowledges Erin Linville Chief of Strategies and Turnaround.

Motion made by Dr. Rivera Colón and seconded by Mr. Romero to suspend the rules to allow Ms. Linville to speak.

Motion passes

- Ms. Linville is excited to hear the plans and can help in any way possible.
- Mayor Garcia adds it's a good idea to have these hearings before we finalize a transition plan. We present it thoroughly and allow engagement in a room where we can offer their feedback and voices can be heard. That way we can adjust on areas we might miss and then finalize and get it over to the school board with any ideas of community contributions.
- Dr. Rivera Colón asked Commissioner Johnston, How sure are you that the plan is finalized by August ? If you really need them finalized by August, could you accept a communication plan on how we're going to do stakeholder input as

part of the plan?

- Commissioner Johnston perceived everything would happen in about the same time. Some things are needed by August; one example is the Budget. Signing warrants and budget development process so these things of that nature are already put in place. The District has a strategic plan and is so deeply informed by community and Holyoke staff input. That plan will already be in place by the beginning of next year. The plan includes how and the working group will be engaged. Late summer/Fall activity for things in place for the 25-26 school year. None of these types of topics have to be done for the 24-25 school year. Commissioner Johnston suggests we should be reaching out to some groups before the end of this school year to alert them on what's upcoming. Union administrators making sure we don't have blind spots. Putting a stakeholder in August but there are some things that can still be worked on and not finalized in August. There does need to be some initial work done now in the way of community and staff engagement. The part where we need them is coming in a more deliberate way in late summer and fall.
- Dr. Rivera Colón we will definitely have that and put in our notes that a communications plan is built already. Rivera Colón opens the floor for thoughts or Comments from the committee.
- Mayor Garcia asked to summarize what we are confirming here?
- Dr. Rivera Colón answers with the summary.
 - Include our communication planner stakeholder input as part of the plan.
 - Start our communications with stakeholders as we confirm that in our next meeting.
 - Recruiting for the working group as well. All of the communications will be finalized or at least draft will be available by the next meeting.
- Mayor Garcia thinks Local Control had the 8 meetings but thinks we will have to make a 9th meeting to finalize the present and get this shared with the school board. Just want to make sure as far as scheduling that we are on Target here.
- Dr. Rivera Colón, We had 6 meetings planned with possible 7th. So we definitely have room for an extra plan and allow for input as well. Everybody involved All the members of the school Committee have access to the draft plan as it is going through. If any members want to include any feedback they can send it to Dr. Rivera Colón and she can include that in as well.
- Ms. Woo requested to resend the link in an email instead of the google doc.

State uses outlook so just sharing the document does not show up on their end they would need the link to the google doc sent to them in an email directly.

- Dr. Rivera Colón made note of that and will resend the working document directly.

Motion to Adjourn made by Mayor Garcia and seconded by Mr. Gustavo.

Motion Passes unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.