

CITY OF HOLYOKE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2023

TIME: 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

DEI sub-committee Chair Dr. Yadilette Rivera-Colón called the meeting to order at 6:06 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: Mr. Romero, Ms. Feliciano, Mr. Collamore and Dr. Rivera-Colón

Holyoke Public Schools members present: Mr. Moguel.

Item #1 - Updates on Holyoke Public Schools' Equity Task Force

Item number one, update some whole new public schools. Equity task force should stay right enough. So just a quick update on the Equity Task force.

Mr. Moguel presented the equity task force update

- The week before, the group convened to discuss next steps, mainly focusing on the partnership with the Equity Imperative, a program generously sponsored and promoted by DESE. This national organization, known for its impactful work, will be instrumental in bringing about significant changes in the district this year.
- The next step involves the introduction of affinity groups, with a particular emphasis on creating safe spaces for staff, especially those who may not currently have such spaces. The Equity Task Force is taking the lead in constructing these affinity groups, including an ally group.
- To facilitate this process, professional development sessions with the Equity Task Force and the Equity Imperative have been initiated. The aim is to receive coaching on how to construct sustainable affinity groups, ensuring that they are not solely reliant on external organizations or specific individuals.
- The timeline for launching affinity groups is ambitious, with the goal of having them in place by February. Ideally, there will be three sessions this year, serving as a foundation for ongoing efforts in the coming years. The Equity Task Force is enthusiastic about the progress made so far and aims to establish affinity groups as a prominent and lasting feature of our district.

- "The Racial Healing Handbook" will serve as a guiding resource for the Equity Task Force. Each member will be provided with a copy, and it will be utilized as a facilitator's guide.
- The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for the end of October or the beginning of November. This session will focus on planning and coordination to ensure a smooth launch of the affinity groups.

Dr. Rivera-Colón commented on how the first meeting provided a great environment for dialogue to create safe spaces for teachers, staff and the whole community.

Dr. Rivera-Colón invited the committee members to ask questions. No questions were asked.

Item #2 - Discussion to create an equitable and inclusive process to rename the replacement Peck school building.

Dr. Rivera-Colón explained that this item was referred to the sub-committee by Mayor Garcia during the last school committee meeting. The sub-committee was asked to discuss how to create an equitable process for renaming the building.

Mr. Collamore posed the question, if a renaming committee was formed, who selects the committee? He also explained that too many people in a committee may take too long to reach a decision.

Mr. Collamore suggested that the full school committee make the decision since in the past this was under the purview of the school committee. He explained that as elected officials the constituents choose the school committee members to make decisions.

Mr. Collamore also clarified that this is a replacement building and not a new school building. He suggested keeping the name, Peck school and having the DEI sub-committee do research about who Dr. Peck was.

Mr. Romero agreed with Mr. Collamore and suggested keeping any original signage from the old building. He also recommended that if we can find sponsors, that would help offset costs and provide naming opportunities to parts of the school like an auditorium..

better education, better tools, better, you know books, whatever staffing, whatever wh. Whatever the case may be, just to elevate our education that much further.

Ms. Feliciano respectfully disagreed on the discussion about the renaming of that school and explained that this is a bigger discussion. She stated that this is an opportunity for change and that keeping things the way they are might not be the best way forward. Ms. Felciano explained that this strategy often leads to repeating the same mistakes.

Ms. Feliciano suggested that a part of the school could be named after Dr. Peck, like the library. She also stated that changing the name would not be taking away the contributions made by Dr. Peck. Ms. Feliciano also emphasized that this is a way to involve the community.

Ms. Feliciano also emphasized that the city of Holyoke does not have schools named after people of color. She stated that this would be an opportunity for our students and families to see themselves represented in their schools.

Dr. Rivera-Colón acknowledged all the different perspectives. She also stated that research has to be done about the history of the naming and Dr. Peck's contributions. Dr. Rivera-Colón also emphasized that is also equally important, that as a the school committee the various cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds that exist in the city, especially within the community that attend Peck school are also taken into consideration.

Dr. Rivera-Colón also reiterated that there are no schools in the city that are named representing a big part of the population of students and people that we serve. She stated that the community's voice is important in this process.

Dr. Rivera-Colón shared a page from the packet about a renaming process example. She also emphasized that the community is not very engaged with the work of the school community nowadays and this renaming process would be an opportunity for their involvement.

Dr. Rivera-Colón stated that sometimes the community stops showing up because they don't feel heard and this is a perfect opportunity where there could be meetings and hear from people and establish those connections.

Mr. Collamore reiterated that the information about William Peck is needed to move forward. He also mentioned the name John J. Lynch is now completely gone with that building.

Dr. Rivera-Colón mentioned that Mayor Garcia will be sharing the information about Dr. Peck with the committee.

Mr. Collamore motioned to table the discussion about the renaming of Peck school until we receive information to educate the Committee on the history and Significance of this current school.

Ms. Feliciano seconded the motion.

There was no discussion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Item #3 - Vote to approve our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) sub-committee charge.

DEI Sub-committee Charge: Partnerships and Resource Allocation

Goal: Collaborate with external organizations, governmental agencies, and community partners to leverage resources and support DEI initiatives within the school district. The sub-committee will help identify potential funding opportunities, grants, and partnerships to enhance the implementation of DEI programs and ensure equitable resource allocation across schools.

Dr. Rivera-Colón invited a motion to approve our subcommittee charge

Ms. Feliciano motioned, Mr. Romero seconded.

Discussion

Mr. Collamore expressed a concern about anything in print pertaining to color within our community that the school committee could be liable for.

Mr. Moguel explained that hiring happens on merit and that the best qualified person gets hired.

Mr. Moguel volunteered to reach out to the chief of human resources, Beth Gage to report back at the next meeting of the Subcommittee to ensure that this is not problematic.

Dr. Rivera-Colón clarified that the concern pertained to the last sub-committee minutes and not on the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Item #4 - Vote to approve the [09-13-23 Minutes](#).

Ms. Feliciano asked for clarification about Mr. Collamore's concern regarding the minutes.

Dr. Rivera-Colón screenshared the section of the meeting minutes that Mr. Collamore was concerned about.

Mr. Romero stated that the word color be removed from the minutes because we are trying to retain all teachers even if they are not teachers of color.

Ms. Feliciano stated that the district is looking to hire people who represent out students and are culturally diverse.

Dr. Rivera-Colón stated that the document in discussion is the minutes from our last meeting, and they should reflect what was talked about, and that taking it out made her hesitant because it was part of what was talked about at the meeting. She also mentioned that this is the diversity, equity, and inclusion subcommittee and part of its nature is to be able to talk about race and talk about color. She also emphasized that all the members have to hold themselves to a high standard that they are not being discriminatory to anybody. Dr. Rivera-Colón added that nobody's perfect and anyone can make mistakes, as committee members we have to own it and be able to grow from it as well.

Dr. Rivera-Colón invites a motion to accept the minutes with the condition that HR checks it and the wording is correct.

Mr. Collamore reiterated his concern and suggested to table the vote.

Ms. Feliciano expressed concerns about altering the meeting minutes wording.

Mr. Romero agreed and also stated that the meeting was already recorded and it is a matter of public record.

Ms. Feliciano motions on the invited motion, seconded by Mr. Romero.

Mr. Romero-Yes

Ms. Feliciano- Yes

Mr. Collamore-No

Dr. Rivera-Colón- Yes

Motion carries 3 to 1.

Dr. Rivera-Colón mentioned the next scheduled meeting fell on the Massachusetts Association for School committee conference date so the next subcommittee meeting will be rescheduled or canceled.

Dr. Rivera-Colón invited a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Romero motioned, seconded by Ms. Feliciano

Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment at 6:52 pm.