

CITY OF HOLYOKE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

LOCAL CONTROL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY, JULY 22nd , 2024

TIME: 5:11 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: Mr. Romero, Mayor Garcia, Dr. Caballero-Roca, Dr. Rivera Colón , Mr. Sheehan.

Also in attendance: Mr. Whelihan, Mr. Collamore, Mrs. Wilson, Ms. Tensely-Williams, Ms. Lefebvre, Student Representative Dean High School Evan Kennedy, Superintendent Soto, Acting Commissioner Russell Johnston and Lauren Woo .

New Business

- **Item #1 - Review of Draft for Transition Plan Holyoke School Committee Capacity Building**

- Recommendations from the Commissioner [Holyoke Public Schools School Committee Capacity Building](#) from first meeting
- Current draft plan for [transition plan Holyoke School Committee](#) Capacity
 - Dr. Rivera Colón thanks Mrs. Lefebvre and Commissioner Johnston and Lauren Woo for all their help in this upcoming document.
 - Dr. Rivera Colón shows a synopsis of what the Transition Plan consists of:

This plan is called the transition plan to build the Holyoke Schools Capacity to resume local control of Holyoke Public Schools. This is still a draft and may remain a draft as the school committee continues to learn more. Elements of this plan may be adjusted as needed.
 - Dr. Rivera Colón presented the next slide on “Empowering the School Committee”.
 - Setting Education for the District
 - Hiring and Evaluating the Superintendent
 - Fiscal Responsibility (Finance and Budget)

- Working with Union
- Policy Making
- Dr. Rivera Colón goes over the transitions plan timeline. Initially started on March 15th 2024. Eight meetings were scheduled with DESE.

Today's review of the Transition plan Collaborations: August 19th, 2024

Finalization of the **Stakeholder Engagement plan**.

- Dr. Rivera Colón continues with the presentation. Starting next school year will be focused on 4 key areas to make sure the School Committee is ready. Finding the best leader, providing effective feedback, managing money wisely, developing strong policies. Each area has specific tasks and deadlines. The entire School Committee will be receiving training to learn new skills in all these areas. Being able to find ways on keeping everyone informed.
- **Workstream 1:** Superintendent Hiring. Community advisory team
Work Stream is a focused area to prepare and resume local control. MASC created a process for selecting a Superintendent. With Input from our Community.
- **Workstream 2:** Superintendent Evaluation
 - Professional development workshop. Create an evaluation timeline. In November voted to adopt the evaluation plan for 2025.
 - In June 2025 School committee and indicators for evaluation committee. Discuss in Public how we are building the school committee capacity?
- **Workstream 3** Finance and Budget.
 - Finance and Operations subcommittee to attend training on the budget process with MASC.
 - Revise protocols for reviewing warrants and payroll.
 - Assign representatives to observe collective bargaining negotiations.
- **Work Stream 4** : Policy development.
 - The Policy sub committee will review all the existing school committee rules. (policies)

Community Advisory Team

- Start recruitment in September and October 2024.
- Role of the CAT in Sy25 is to support the School Committee in planning

and implementation of the hiring of the Superintendent and the Evaluation Process.

Proposed Name Change: Changing the of the “Transitions Plan” to “Building the School Committee Capacity to resume Local Control”

Dr. Rivera Colón opens the floor to add feedback on the change of the name.

- Suggest monthly review of the Plan. Is that too much too little or is that a suitable frequency for review of this plan ?
- Mayor Garcia agrees with the name change. Would like to add clarification on the obligations to search for a Superintendent. Mayor Garcia asked Commissioner Johnston whether the city can stay with this Superintendent or maybe the body is obligated for a search?
- Commissioner Johnston replies “no” the Committee is not obligated to do a whole search process. We just want to create a plan for evaluation and hiring of a Superintendent. That's the vital thing to have. Really looking for what the best options are for the School Committee. Decide what the plan can be.
- Dr. Caballero-Roca asked in terms of the Superintendent Evaluation, What are the guidelines and where are the resources that we need to be in line with the expectations with DESI. ?
- Commissioner Johnston reminds us there are trainings that already exist. A partner like MASC will be able to guide and answer all the questions for this situation. I know you will all be able to take advantage and learn from this training this fall. Commissioner Johnston is confident that the school committee will learn and take on different courses and agrees with the name change.
- Mr. Sheehan agrees with the name change. He mentions looking at all of this as a full committee review could be cumbersome. A suggestion would be a school committee member to be the leader or appointed to each workstream. The member would serve as monitor for this. Then they touch base with all the other members on the Workstream in a meeting. This would create some more guidance. That way we can have some more critical focus on these areas and will help with continuous improvement on these workstreams. Each person can be responsible for presenting and gathering suggestions for each part of this plan. The next meeting in August the plan is being finalized in front of the full school committee.

- Dr. Rivera Colón expresses that the bulk of working on the plan to become the plan we get to see really happens in this meeting and the last meeting. The sub committee was able to put all this together with the help from Jennifer and Lauren Woo. The subcommittee will still need to get feedback and hear from everyone within the school committee. Everyone's input is helpful. What will the roles be of each member within this plan?
- Mr. Sheehan brought up the school committee's input of legal councils and if it is worked into the plan. Who is going to be the representative? That is one of the things we would need to think about. Something should be worked into the plan for who will be the representatives. Whenever this transition occurs we are prepared legally .
- Commissioner Johnston states that there has to be representation at all times. Operation wise there will be an active decision. Appreciate the feedback on how to structure this transition.
- Mr. Sheehan identified on the Policy development workstream. Slide 8 when you go into 9 the policy process. One of the boxes is full School Committee votes and the secretary sends policy to MASC. Mr. Sheehan suggested the steps should be MASC then HPS Receiver, and full School Committee votes get sent to the Receiver then goes to MASC for updates. During this transition the receiver can choose to not to adopt a policy. It needs that review of the receiver first.
- Dr. Rivera Colón opens the floor for any other questions or feedback?
 - Mayor Garcia motion to Suspend the rules to allow John Whelihan to speak ?
 - Dr. Caballero Roca seconded the motion.
 - **Motion passed unanimously.**
- John Whelihan follows up on Mr. Sheehan's question regarding the legal part. Prior to receivership we had an outside council that represented us, this could be a question for Mayor Garcia. Do we go to outside counsel, legal or lawyers to overview the process? We would need a budget for legal counsel. When DESE said, 25 years that represented the school. Grievances have not been touched upon. Lawyers have always helped us out and gave us legal advice and counsel. In terms of hiring a superintendent could be the least of our problems right now. In John Whielihans opinion hiring a new superintendent should be put off for now we should primarily focus on the local control.
 - Mayor Garcia expressed , we would think as far as having that legal

representation ideally we would identify what those options are to achieve those goals. Could the City Solicitor do it ? What would that cost? What would the proposal for an external company be? Should we use the same counsel we had for 25 years collectively, can we make that decision? We do need to represent this body for sure. Put it on the agenda and it will be reviewed on Saturday. Sounds like it is being planned for review during this upcoming retreat.

- Any opportunity is a chance to always take for sure, Dr. Rivera Colón assures us.
- Receiver Soto proposed if he may provide clarity on what legal representation the city does provide us especially for all of our procurement . We have other attorneys for specific things: workers comp, special education, student relations, and Title 9. The school committee should look at what we are doing right now and how we plan to deliver legal counsel in the future once local control is in place.
- Dr. Roca Caballero how is the community advisory team going to keep the feedback ? Help think about this issue see more of the sociological approach for this document. Would love to see how the community is accessing this information. The people wonder if the resources are going to get that feedback of an evaluation that is in service of integrity.
- Mayor Garcia that goes to the clarification of why the name changed. State hands to an elected body. We certainly want public feedback on this. Strategic plan is all in line with everything . Local control as far as managing the institution or collective bargaining I think there is less. Holyoke always wants to hear from the community, the district and strategic planning and initiative that is in that plan with Operations serving the kids managing schools, the union reps at what point do they come in and have a conversation about the transition plans?
- Dr. Rivera Colón another point that should be clarified with the creation of this community advisory team is how to engage with the public, that's not what is being proposed. The people that are close to us so we can ask for feedback . In General when there is a community , Smaller community teams the information collected is repetitive . Chamber, that's not what we want to form this team . The goal is to get feedback from as many people from the community with various opinions and input.
- Ms. Lefebvre states that this is where the confusion lies. It is clearly our job as school committee members. It's their job to figure out how to get that feedback,

Direct the team to where we are going to go and what we are going to do .

- Ms. Lefebvre stated her understanding during the conversations that building our capacity was in order to get back to local control . It's about our roles and responsibilities and what we should be doing as school committee members to make sure when the district is taken back over that we are running it properly.
 - Training
 - Professional Development

Development and creation of superintendent hiring and evaluation process. Mr. Ventura was here at this time for community meetings. We got feedback from what we would like to see. How do we use our community advisory teams? Forums or someone sitting outside , we come together as a team and we decide how we want to utilize them and come back to the committee with the feedback gained. Make sure we sound prepared and ready to take on Local Control .

- Mayor Garcia adds we will have a tangible draft that will be spoken on during the retreat . August 19th is the next Local Control subcommittee meeting.
- Commission Johnston hopes the retreat goes well . Appreciates the time and attention that has been given to this planning process thus far. Good questions that we raised tonight. Final Review In late August 2024 later.

Item #2 - Approval of [6-10-2024](#) minutes. Motioned by Mr. Sheehan and second by Major Garcia. Motion passed unanimously.

- Motion to adjourn set by Mayor Garcia. Motion passed unanimously.
- **Meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.**