

Draft: Not Approved by Board

Rochester Board of Education
Special Meeting
May 1, 2008

5:30 p.m.

Minutes

Attendance: President Evans, Vice President White, Commissioner Brennan (arrived 5:41 p.m.), Commissioner Campos, Commissioner Elliott, Commissioner Powell, Commissioner Williams. Superintendent Brizard. Board Clerk L. Dunsmoor.

President Evans convened the meeting at 5:38 p.m. Commissioner Williams led the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Evans said he was adjusting the agenda; Resolution 2007-08: 658 would be considered first.

Motion to approve 2007-08: 658 by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner White.

Discussion:

President Evans explained that it is a resolution of support so that the Board can complete its application to the Center for Reform of School Systems' Reform Governance in Action training. The resolution supports the larger application; the Board may not be selected. The training would begin in July 2008 and continue through the spring of 2010.

Commissioner Elliott said she becomes concerned when information is not provided on a timely basis. She believes the Board Governance Committee is being undermined, as it is responsible for Board Development, and she takes exception to this process. She will not participate and does not have the time. Administration needs to be far more communicative with these kinds of issues. She recalled a similar situation in which she said the Superintendent did circumvent the authority of the Board Governance Committee. The Board should be driving the Superintendent, not vice versa.

President Evans said the invitation letter had only recently been received by he and the Superintendent. Participation requires buy-in from the full Board and that is why he took it upon himself to have Board staff canvass individuals regarding the matter. There was no intention to circumvent Board Governance. This is an opportunity that the full Board should be aware of.

Commissioner White said recommendations that arose from the training would go to Board Governance, and although he understands the concerns, there is nothing final about the application. The Board still has to be accepted through the application process. He views it as an opportunity to improve the Board's product and services.

Commissioner Powell said the application is an opportunity for truly world-class training that doesn't come around every day. The Board has high aspirations for students and staff; it should aspire to something really big for itself and this is it.

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Superintendent Brizard noted that the training will provide the Board with the opportunity to interface with other urban Boards from across the country facing similar challenges. That interaction can be invaluable. Commissioner Brennan noted the four off-site trainings and asked whether insight cannot be derived some other way. In-service is one thing; indoctrination is another. He is skeptical about sole points of view being provided at trainings, and while he will reserve his personal judgment, he does not want to deprive others of the opportunity to participate. With all due respect, Board members know what their responsibilities are and need to start acting in good faith with each other and examine their own behavior. He also raised a flag about the expense involved and would like to be better informed.

Commissioner Evans said resolution only supports the application; there is no guarantee the Board will be selected.

Commissioner Campos said the definition of insanity is doing things the same way and expecting different results. She believes this to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create common Board goals and become effective at working toward them. She also thinks the training will impact the issues raised by Commissioner Brennan.

Superintendent Brizard said the application is not an attempt to circumvent Board Governance or the authority of the Board. The training is not new, it is proven, and the bulk of the expense will be underwritten by the Broad Foundation. All urban boards are struggling with the same issues, and this is an opportunity for the Board to interact with other Boards and become a leader in these kinds of conversations.

Commissioner Elliott said Rochester is a leader in health care, youth services, and the United Way. The nation looks to Rochester for leadership in these areas. She is interested in what will work. The resources are here and should be embraced. When those are exhausted, that is when outside sources should be sought. The city has a national reputation in many areas and often does not appreciate what is here.

Commissioner White said the Board is on the verge of serving as another example similar to those cited by Commissioner Elliott. There is evidence that the Board is on the right track, but it cannot stop looking for resources outside of Central Office. He does not see how participation could hurt.

President Evans delayed a request to call the question until all commissioners were heard. Commissioner Brennan noted that if unanimity were required for the application, everyone should have his or her opinion noted. President Evans clarified that unanimity would be a factor in the application but not the deciding factor.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner Williams:	Yes
Commissioner Powell:	Yes
Commissioner White:	Yes
Commissioner Elliott:	No
Commissioner Campos:	Yes
Commissioner Brennan:	Yes
President Evans:	Yes

Adopted 6-1.

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Item 2) Proposed Bylaws Amendment

Motion by Commissioner Brennan to amend the Board's Bylaws to include Student Recognition as Item II on the monthly Business Meeting Order of Business. Second by Commissioner Campos.

Discussion:

Commissioner White said he supports having this as an agenda items but the Board should respect the structure already in place. Student Recognition does happen regularly. He also raised concerns about how the process got to this point. He reiterated that student recognition is an excellent idea.

Commissioner Campos said process was followed. An idea from committee was raised at the dais, referred by the President to another committee, and then not acted on by that committee. It was acceptable that it then be raised to the full Board, and she did ask for a waiver of the one-week notice because the issue was raised at the February Business Meeting.

Commissioner Powell suggested the Board simply make clear to the President that it wants student recognition as a priority at Business Meetings; he is vested with authority over the Order of Business. If necessary a change can be made in November or December for 2009 and potentially a different President. Is something like this truly necessary when we are already willing to embrace student recognition?

Commissioner Elliott said she had no problem with Student Recognition being on the agenda as a standard item, but she was concerned about the process. The tone of the last Business Meeting – just vote on it – scared her in that it can open a pattern. This issue could have been discussed in Board Governance and the process followed. All the information is not available on the impact of the change. She does not believe in focusing on process per se but there has to be order. The Board is in continuous improvement, it is a new board, and as she herself has only been here two years she would like to err on the side of caution. She is offended by the attitude that a vote by the Board is not a big deal because it is a huge deal.

President Evans said the Board's own process was followed and was confused as to why commissioner said it was not. The only questionable part was the waiver of the one-week rule, which he mediated by calling this special meeting. Student recognition is an important item, and while he agrees with much of what Commissioner Powell said, he does not think it hurts to have Student Recognition become a formal part of the agenda.

Commissioner Elliott said it is an issue that impacts the Board and that is why she believes it should have come from Board Governance.

Commissioner Brennan said it could have gone to either or both committees and he will refrain from comments regarding the committee system. No one means any disrespect. Making student recognition an official part of the agenda sends a message that it is important to the Board.

Roll Call Vote:

Commissioner Williams: Yes
Commissioner Powell: Yes

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Commissioner White:	Yes
Commissioner Elliott:	Yes
Commissioner Campos:	Yes
Commissioner Brennan:	Yes
President Evans:	Yes

Adopted 7-0.

Motion for Executive Session to discuss Long Term Suspension appeals by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0 at 6:11 p.m.

President Evans re-convened the public meeting at 6: 35 p.m. Motion to adjourn by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0 at 6:35 p.m.