

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS/MALES OF COLOR OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 23, 2019, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:18 p.m. Present were member Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Martin Rubin, Ricardo Alvelo, Terry Walden, LaMar Kennedy, Eric Alicea, Sana Shah, Natasha Noel and Dr. Carmen McPherson.

Supt. Dr. Aresta L. Johnson was present.

Mr. Alicea moved to approve the minutes of the committee's meeting of March 26 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Walden and unanimously approved.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said if the nutrition center provided food for the forum there would be a cost concerned. Mr. Sokolovic said the inquiry at the previous meeting was just trying to get a little extra bang for our buck.

The next agenda item was planning for the community forum scheduled for May 16th.

Mr. Rubin said he connected the proposed speaker, Nate Taylor, with Dr. Jenkins.

Ms. Noel said she spoke with Dr. Jenkins about a proposed speaker, Conan Harris, husband of Rep. Ayanna Pressley.

There was a discussion of potential breakout sessions.

Ms. Noel said the first community forum was organized to be an information-gathering session to help inform the work of the committee. There were 22 breakout sessions with 40-plus facilitators to lead the sessions. She described the 22 groups like focus groups, where questions were posed to participants.

Ms. Noel said she viewed the second gathering as a report-back to the community as to what we have done and outline next steps.

Mr. Sokolovic said he thought this year's forum was geared towards educators. Mr. Alicea and Ms. Shah said they didn't think there were many teachers at last year's event. Mr. Walden said last year's forum led to recruiting a pool of mentors. He said it was important for the educators see how the community responds to the call and encourage them to become active participants.

Mr. Sokolovic said the worst thing that could happen would be push something and have it fail.

Mr. Rubin said the approach at Bassick has been to celebrate of the mentors and the work of the mentees to encourage buy-in from the school. He said he suggested Mr. Taylor as a speaker because he was so effective that it is almost unfair that students at Harding and Central did not hear him.

Mr. Sokolovic spoke on the importance of identifying biases and what he had learned about biases with his African-American son in the district.

Ms. Shah said it was important to make the effort sustainable. She said she was on the policy subcommittee with Dr. Jenkins, Dr. McPherson and Dr. Kearney. She said one task would be to put systems in place that helps educators with bias.

Ms. Noel said Mr. Harris had a national perspective on the work through My Brothers Keeper. She viewed this year's forum as ending with a call to action with a pledge or commitment.

Mr. Rubin described how Mr. Taylor speaks to young people about things such as personal image, body language and how to create soft skills.

Ms. Noel said Mr. Harris was available on May 16th. There was a discussion of whether the forum should be pushed to another date or not. Ms. Noel suggested a subcommittee meeting like last year to work out the details out of the forum.

Dr. Johnson suggested thinking about segments with running themes of the past, present and future. She said she believes student voice should be front and center.

Dr. Johnson said she could have the IT department live stream the forum. She added if the date or location was changed there was paperwork that had to be completed. Mr. Sokolovic noted the board had approved the May 16th date. He asked the subcommittee members to keep him informed of discussions.

There was a discussion of the potential length of the forum. Mr. Walden said if the audience is largely educators we would want to get them home earlier rather than later. Mr.

Rubin said he could help spread the word among educators at professional development sessions.

There was a discussion of making unconscious bias the theme of the forum. Dr. Johnson recommended the book *For White Folks Who Teach in Hood and the Rest of Y'all Too* by Chris Emdin.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod