

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE / CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

TIME: 5:30 PM

FIFIELD ROOM, DEAN & ONLINE VIA ZOOM

Meeting called to order at 5:32 PM.

Present: Erin Brunelle (Chair), Juan C. Anderson- Burgos (Chair), Jenny Rivera, John Whelihan, Yadilette Rivera Colon (zoom), Tessa Murphy Rombelti (joined- 5:48PM)

Also Present: Anthony Soto, Superintendent, City Councilor Jose Maldonado Velez.

**Item Number One- the exploration of bringing back the JRTOC- Receiver/Superintendent to provide the information requested in order.**

- Mr. Whelihan, Shared that bringing back the program was previously brought up by School Committee Member Ms. Tensley Williams and she supports the program and is in favor of bringing back the program.
- Superintendent Soto explained that the order was filed some time ago, and the counselor who submitted this is not present. The district previously had a JRTOC program at Dean. And if the district was to bring it back there is a federal grant to support this.
- Mr. Whelihan suggested that the district could survey take places to see if students are interested in the program
- **Motion** set by Mr. Whelihan, seconded by Mr. Anderson-Burgos, that the school district surveys the student population to see if there is interest in redeveloping the program and to get a report back from the school department on the history of the JRTOC program, and why we stopped the program.
  - **Roll Call:** Erin Brunelle (Chair), yes, Juan C. Anderson- Burgos,(Chair), yes, Jenny Rivera, yes, John Whelihan, yes, Yadilette Rivera Colon (zoom), yes.

**Item Number 2- Discuss the City Council's recent order and vote to change the name of the joint committee.**

- Ms. Brunelle shared that the school committee was disappointed that the school committee was not notified of the order, or part of the discussion of the order, and not notified of the change that took place. Ms. Brunelle invited Councilor Maldonado Velez to the meeting to discuss the change since the joint city council/school committee's name is being changed and what he was looking to be accomplished with this.
- Mr. Maldonado Velez explained that his intention was not to change the name of the committee, his intention was on the city council side there is a youth services committee whose attention would be to items that would not be discussed by the school committee, but would serve as representatives at the joint city council/ school committee meetings.
- Mr. Maldonado Velez shared his apologies to the committee as he did not think it would affect the school committee, when in fact it did especially with "school committee" as part of the name, it should have been brought to the school committee for discussion.
- Mr. Maldondo Velez shared a few examples of how the youth committee would be involved. Within the city council rules, they would need a youth representative, and they would be able to participate in the joint committee meetings. Another example would be, the community wanting a youth center, which would be discussed at a school committee meeting, but could be discussed within the joint city council/school committee with the youth services committee.

- A question that came up with Mildred was for the committee to discuss some of the other stuff other than the public school body.
- Mr. Whelihan appreciates the committee getting the youth involved, especially since COVID and the students today having anxiety, with the masks and social distancing, he appreciates the push to keep the students involved.
- Mr. Whelihan explains the school committee has 2 student representatives and it is great to hear the insight from the students.
- Ms. Brunelle recognizes city councilor, Isreal Rivera to speak.
- Mr. Rivera shared that the idea was to capture all youth in the community that may not be a part of the Holyoke Public Schools. Youth who may attend private, charter, parochial school, or attend school out of the district. The intent was also to be able to share information that would reach all the youth in the community not just Holyoke Public School students and families.
- Ms. Brunelle shared that what Mr. Maldonado Velez and Mr. Rivera are trying to do seem to be a new committee, and that it was open to city councilors and the school committee to better service all the youth in the city of Holyoke. Also to remember, the budgeting, bussing, buildings, and maintenance.
- Ms. Brunelle shared that there is sometimes not a lot on the docket for the joint committee, which may change once we are out of receivership or not, but that is what the joint committee was created to do.
- Mr. Anderson Burgos is looking to clarify the main objective is to give a voice to the students so they are part of the process. He agrees that changing the name and all the work that has been done in the joint committee is different than what Mr. Maldonado Velez wants for the youth services committee.
- **Motion** set by Mr. Anderson Burgos, seconded by X to refer this back to the full council to restructure and figure out the best way to bring it back to the joint committee.
- Discussion
  - Ms. Rivera Colon shares that the intention is right on, and agrees that the youth need a space for civic engagement to be a part what happens in the city.
  - Superintendent Soto shared that Mayor Garcia reached out to him sharing that he allocated 10,000 dollars to bring back a youth commission and Superintendent Soto is working with the high school principals to coordinate and the school have already identified students to be a part of this. Staff are ready to support, but he is unsure of the role of how to they should reach out to the council.
- **Roll Call:** Erin Brunelle (Chair), yes, Juan C. Anderson- Burgos,(Chair), yes, Jenny Rivera, yes, John Whelihan, yes, Yadilette Rivera Colon (zoom), yes, Tessa Murphy Rombelti, yes.

### Item Number 3- Update on the School building committee

- Superintendent Soto shared:
  - In may of last year we we in the eligibility period, now we have gotten funding to move to Feasibility.
  - Topics discussed at MSBA FAS Meeting on September 14
  - Agenda was as follows, Purpose: Vision for the Future, Background: How we got here, Moving Forward: How decisions will be made, Big Decision: Which buildings will be middle schools?, Three Scenarios and Discussion
  - The proposed project schedule and next steps include:
    - Reviewed three possible timelines with the School Building Committee
    - Will revisit precise timing of City Council vote with the SBC at an upcoming meeting
    - Advancing to next stage of model school process with MSBA → Kick-off meeting Today
    - Invite selected Model School designers to make proposals (late Sept)

- Review proposals and interview (October)
  - Rank applicants
  - Negotiate with top ranked applicant
- The district shared the background story and share the efforts of outreach since 2020.
  - School Building Committee (SBC) meetings (11)
  - School Committee (SC) meetings (7)
  - City Council (CC) Full or Subcommittee meetings (6)
  - Joint Committee meetings of SC and CC (4)
  - Peck School Building Tour to SBC & CC (2)
  - Moving Forward Community Meetings (3)
  - Middle Grades Study Team (MCST) Meetings (5)
  - MGST Empathy Interviews (30+)
  - Middle Grades Study Team Presentations (12)
  - Rezoning Task Force Meetings (3)
  - Rezoning Working Group Meetings (8)
  - Rezoning Outreach at Community/School Events (40+)
  - Surveys (3)
  - Videos (2)
  - Holyoke Update newsletter
  - Website Updates (Building Project, Rezoning)
  - Entry Plan Efforts: 1,150+ voices
  - Strategic Plan Efforts: 400+ voices
- Rezoning
  - Background Summary
    - Many efforts over the past 7 years
    - Trying to build new middle schools
    - Exploring middle school models
    - Growing dual language
    - Determining which grades should be elementary vs. middle
    - Teacher teams, leaders, families, students and community members have had significant input in the efforts
    - What's working?
    - What needs to change?
    - What are your hopes for the future?
  - The second equity commitment is why we are doing rezoning. The third equity commitment shows the importance of all the activities we are doing to get peoples input.
  - The most important guidelines for rezoning
    - Most Important
      - Design schools that put student needs first and prioritize money spent on instruction
      - Ensure equitable access to special programs
    - Very Important

- Balance student demographics across schools (esp. important in MS)
  - Ensure program continuity from elementary to middle school
  - Ensure efficient use of space and stable enrollment
- Important
  - Ensure safe walking routes
  - Have neighborhood schools (esp. important in elem)
  - Minimize the impact on families
  - Minimize transportation costs
- The rezoning task force participated in a workshop to help identify the categories. HPS leadership grouped the workshop results into categories. Then, HPS surveyed 123 stakeholders, in meetings and online. The rezoning task force includes parents and community members.
- The announcement will be coming out in two phases
  - Phase 1 late October-
    - Which schools are elementary vs. middle in 2023 and 2026
    - The school leader of each in 2023
    - The location of dual language programming
    - The process for reassignment of impacted staff
  - Phase 2 late November-
    - The exact boundary lines
    - The location of special education programming
    - The process and timing by which any displaced students will be assigned to a specific program (e.g. sub-separate, dual language)
    - The appeals process and timing
    - The exact date in Dec. when impacted staff will be notified
    - List of requested upgrades to designated middle school
- Which 2 buildings will be middle schools in 2026?
  - Building 1: Current/New Peck
  - Building 2: Donahue, Kelly, or Sullivan?
- Current/New Peck will be determined through City Council & MSBA
- Donahue, Kelly and Sullivan all have the same number of full-sized classrooms and therefore, similar and sufficient capacity
- Major Takeaway is that each building (Donahue, Kelly, Sullivan) is a reasonable option for Holyoke - similar size, condition and features.
- More likely to come down to the community's preference on where a second middle school is located.
- Scenario Summary
  - Each scenario has 6 elementary schools and 3 middle schools
  - All scenarios have Pre-K at different locations
  - The location of the Dual Language Program is different in each scenario, some as a whole school and some as part of the school.

- In all cases, Holyoke Middle closes next year and Peck closes temporarily. When a new peck is built in 2026, then Stem and Metcalf would close and move into the new peck building.
- All scenarios are better than what we have today and are relatively comparable. There isn't a "wrong" answer. Each scenario could work well for Holyoke.
- Timeline for phase 1 outreach includes:
  - Rezoning Task Force (Sept. 12)
  - Staff meetings at every elem, middle & PK-8 school (Sept. 12 - 21)
  - Family and Community Meetings
  - Wed, Sept. 14, 5 pm - Kelly
  - Wed, Sept. 21, 9 am - Virtual
  - Thurs, Sept. 29, 5:30 pm - Holyoke High
  - Tues, Oct. 11, 5:30 - Virtual
  - School Committee monthly meetings and October retreat
  - Continued community and school-based outreach, especially at back-to-school events and open houses
  - Stakeholder Survey (Aug. 19 - Oct. 13)
- Mr. Whelihan questions the bidding process and wants to know if it will be handled by the city procurement office, or the schools.
- Superintendent Soto shared it will be done by the building committee, and the OPM.
- Ms. Brunelle shared that the student from Metcalf moving schools will go together. The space is not big enough to align with the changes happening in the schools. And some families feel that they were blindsided by this move.
- Superintendent Soto shared that he does not want families to feel that way. And he wants to ensure families are feeling supported and informed during rezoning.
- Ms. Rivera Colon questioned whether STEM going to be a part of HPS?
- Superintendent Soto shared that he would like for both middle schools to have STEM programming.

**Item Number 4- Review and approve meeting minutes from the 5/26 meeting.**

- **Motion** set by Mr. Anderson Burgos, seconded by Mr. Whelihan to approve the 5-26-2022 meeting minutes.
- **Roll Call:** Erin Brunelle (Chair), yes, Juan C. Anderson- Burgos, (Chair), yes, Jenny Rivera, yes, John Whelihan, yes, Yadilette Rivera Colon (zoom) abstain, Tessa Murphy Rombelti, yes.

**Motion to adjourn set by Mr. Anderson Burgos seconded by Ms. Rivera Colon.**

**Adjournment 6:50 PM**