

Wilmington Education Improvement Commission – Redistricting Committee

Red Clay Consolidated School District Office

Minutes – September 10, 2015

Dr. Joe Pika, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

After welcoming everyone, Dr. Pika invited the committee members and the members of the public to introduce themselves.

Dr. Pika invited Dr. Dan Rich, Wilmington Education Improvement Commission Policy Director, to give an overview of the legislation, Senate Bill 122, attached. Dr. Rich explained that the bill passed both the Delaware House of Representatives and Senate with bipartisan support, and was signed by the Governor on August 4, 2015. This legislation authorizes the State Board of Education to alter district boundaries of the Northern New Castle County School Districts consistent with the recommendations made in the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee final report and based on a transition, resource, and implementation plan prepared by the Commission. The plan, which will be proposed to the Commission by the Redistricting Committee, and approved by the Commission for submission to the State Board of Education, will include a resolution that the State Board must either approve, or not approve, the plan as a complete package. If they do not approve, they must explain why, and the Commission has sixty days to resubmit. The State Board of Education's authority to act under Senate Bill 122 ends on March 31, 2016.

Dr. Pika opened the discussion to questions from the committee members.

- A question was asked about State Board of Education member attendance at the redistricting committee meetings.
 - The answer given was that all meetings are open to the public. Members of the Commission will brief the State Board frequently throughout the process, presenting at several meetings and at the State Board retreat.
- A question was asked about whether or not the Legislature and Governor are legally obligated to fund this package, if signed by the Governor.
 - The answer given was that it is the Commission's understanding that the State Board of Education, the General Assembly, and the Governor must accept the entire plan, or none of it.

Dr. Pika noted that the timeline is tight, but everyone was reminded that this has been a yearlong process to get to this point.

- A question was raised about the district plans: if the district plans are not fully developed yet, how can we be sure that the students will be better served?
 - The answer given was that requiring the districts to fully develop these plans prior to being sure that this action will be taken is unreasonable. The outline of the plan submitted by the Commission will include the district transition, resource, and implementation plans will be included in the supplemental materials section. The Commission's plan will stipulate the process to be taken on many of these items.

- There was a clarification that the school boards will not vote on the Commission's plan. SB 122 mandates the State Board's ability to approve the change in district lines based on the recommendations of WEIC.
- There was a clarification of the legislation; line 40 supersedes line 16, under the conditions and timeframe stipulated in the legislation.

Dr. Rich discussed the timeline which is provided here.

- A question was asked about the role of the committee in selecting guiding principles.
 - The Commission has adopted guiding principles from WEAC, but the Redistricting Committee is free to add principles for the report.
- A question was asked about the State Board's ability to implement sections of the report but not all of it.
 - The State Board does not have that authority; they can either approve or not approve the plan in full.

Dr. Pika described the close connection between the funding and the redistricting committees.

Dr. Pika opened the discussion up to public comment

- A concern was raised that vocational technical schools are not included, and that the districts were not allowed a say in what happens with the report.
 - The co-chairs answered that the New Castle County Vocational Technical School District Superintendent is on this committee, and that there are committees working to pull together collaboration among all types of schools.

Dr. Pika reminded the group that the tasks ahead of the committee involve coordinating with the work of the districts and aligning discussions with the necessary timeline for the writing of the report and the Commission decisions.

Christina and Red Clay have begun discussions to understand a starting point. They have discussed transportation, nutrition, programs, and capital assets, among other things.

- A comment was made about the need for coordination among the subcommittees.
- A question was asked about going into Colonial to talk with the parents of the families affected to determine what is best for them.
 - Dr. Harper explained that while it would be nice to be able to involve parents and families that way, school district boundaries are not decided that way.

Dr. Harper closed by describing his skepticism upon first joining the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee. He has seen what can happen and believes that change is possible now, but if this window closes, it will not open again. He encouraged everyone to continue actively participating.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Redistricting Committee
Attendance at the 9/10 Meeting**

Redistricting Committee Members

Joe Pika, Co-Chair
Henry Harper, Co-Chair
Vicki Gehrt
Mark Holodick
Marv Daugherty
Harrie Ellen Minnehan

Kelli Racca
Ted Ammann
Kenny Rivera
Leah Davis
Kristin Dwyer, on behalf of Jeff Taschner
Jill Floore

Members of the Public

Bob Silber
Jim Purcell
Representative Kim Williams, 19th District
Kevin Carson
Laura Nash
Shaun (Hope) Bellamy

Sam Golder
Hugh Broomall
Kiatanna Lawson
John Lasnik
The Honorable Nnamdi Chukwuocha
Mike Matthews

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Dan Rich
Kelly Sherretz
Elizabeth Burland