

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
At Sarah Pyle Academy Gymnasium
October 20, 2015**

Commission Vice-Chair Kenny Rivera called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

Members of the public introduced themselves and stated their organizational affiliations.

The Commission voted to approve minutes from the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) meeting held on September 15, 2015. The minutes were approved.

The Commission voted to approve the meeting agenda. The agenda was approved.

Dr. Daniel Rich, WEIC Policy Director, clarified the scope of the Commission's responsibilities. He emphasized that while the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee (WEAC) report provides the baseline for issues to be addressed by WEIC, the Commission may choose to consider additional topics consistent with the report findings and legislative mandate.

Committee Report-Out

Charter and District Collaboration

The Charter and District Collaboration Committee held its first meeting on September 21, 2015. The goal of this meeting was primarily to outline the committee's objectives and priorities. During this meeting, the committee requested additional research from WEIC support staff at the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA). Topics during this meeting included equity, inclusion, school competition, and school collaboration. The committee also discussed planning and implementation processes following policy changes. In addition, the committee agreed that school staff training must be prioritized during a transition period. The committee will hold its next meeting on October 28, 2015. During this meeting, the committee will evaluate the findings provided by IPA support staff. In addition to data analysis, the meeting will include time for public comment. Finally, the committee noted the addition of new members and ongoing search for representatives from the Vo-Tech district.

Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty

The committee held its first meeting on September 28, 2015. This meeting was primarily devoted to better understanding the committee's responsibilities, goals, and objectives. The committee will hold its next meeting on October 26, 2015. At this meeting, the committee has requested a presentation from the University of

Delaware on poverty in the state and appropriate definitions in light of changing federal measures.

Dr. Rich noted that a report produced by the University of Delaware Center for Community Research and Service, "Overview of Poverty in Delaware," is included in the packets prepared for the Commission meeting.

Funding Committee

The committee shared that while its official meetings are held every other week, members have been meeting weekly to meet the required deadlines. During these meetings, the committee has developed a working knowledge of the current funding system and is continuing to explore possible alternatives, including the weighted unit formula proposed in the final WEAC report. The committee has also discussed how schools should be funded when they have high concentrations of English language learners, children with disabilities, and low-income students. The committee additionally focused on district tax revenue as a funding measure, noting the importance of property reassessment and possible equalization formulas. These discussions included efforts to identify the operational costs of redistricting and restructuring facilities and technology.

Redistricting Committee

The Redistricting Committee noted progress made during previous meetings and shared the expectation that part of the draft redistricting plan will be presented at the next meeting for members' consideration. Much of the committee's focus has been to facilitate conversations concerning the transition of facilities from Christina to Red Clay. The committee will assist with the transition process and hopes to negotiate appropriate deadlines within the mandated timeframe; members emphasized the impacts of imposing such a tight schedule on parents, students, and schools. The committee also reported on the Colonial School District Board's statement in favor of continuing to serve Wilmington students despite WEAC recommendations that the district should no longer do so. The next committee meeting will address this topic in addition to detailing technology and security transition processes between districts. The committee restated members' awareness of the required deadlines and noted that all are working hard to produce the draft plan as quickly as possible.

Aretha Miller, Co-chair of the Charter and District Collaboration Committee, asked whether the Redistricting Committee had discussed the implications of redistricting on charter schools. Dr. Joe Pika, Redistricting Committee Co-chair, said that they have not talked about this issue yet but plan to discuss it at the next meeting. Jill Floore, Co-chair of the Funding Committee, added that charter school consideration remains a crucial component of the redistricting process.

Rep. Charles Potter (District 1—Wilmington North) asked whether the committee had discussed school board and district reconfiguration. Dr. Pika replied that they had briefly discussed reconfiguration and the topic that will be further addressed at

future meetings. He added that district lines are typically only redrawn following census data returns, and the Redistricting Committee is seeking consultation on the matter.

Updates on Public Meetings

Town Halls

Dr. Rich communicated that town hall meetings have been held weekly; the next meeting will take place on Thursday, October 22, 2015. He stated that town halls meetings have been scheduled in all of the districts to provide adequate opportunity for questions to be answered. All information, presentations, and meeting schedules are posted on the WEIC website (www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com).

Public Hearings

Public hearings will be held after WEIC publishes its interim report. By legislative mandate, the Commission is required to make its interim report available to the public. The Commission will present a final report for approval to the State Board of Education. Dr. Rich encouraged all present to attend at least one public hearing. Information on the Public Hearings, and what will constitute the official Public Record, was distributed and is posted on www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com.

Dr. Pika added that the Access to Justice Commission will also hold public hearings that overlap with several WEIC priorities. The Access to Justice Commission seeks to address disparities in Delaware's criminal justice system, focusing on root causes such as poverty and educational disparities. A hearing focusing on root causes will be held on October 22, 2015. This hearing will host experts from the University of Delaware who will provide testimony as part of a moderated panel. Dr. Pika added that both he and Dr. Rich will submit written testimony to the Access to Justice Commission drawn from the work of WEIC.

Update on Draft Redistricting Plan

Dr. Rich provided an update on the redistricting plan and upcoming deadlines. He communicated that WEIC's interim report will be released to the public on November 17, 2015. The Commission will consider public input on the interim report before submitting the final report to the State Board of Education.

Dr. Rich presented an overview of the Commission's legislative mandate with regards to redistricting. Senate Bill 122 authorizes the State Board of Education to alter boundaries of New Castle County school districts. Redistricting must be consistent with the WEAC final report and based on a transition, resource, and implementation plan prepared by the Commission.

Redistricting Deadlines

November 17, 2015: Commission will release draft plan for public comment.

December 15, 2015: Commission will submit the final plan to the State Board, after considering the public comment.

January 21, 2015: State Board acts on Commission plan as a package.

March 31, 2015: Authority of the State Board to act under the provisions of Senate Bill 122 terminates.

The redistricting plan will be submitted to the State Board as a package to be reviewed and approved in its entirety. If the Board does not approve the plan, the Commission will have 60 days to revise and resubmit. Upon Board approval, the plan will go to the General Assembly and Governor for confirmation.

The Commission reviewed the draft outline for the plan.

Joseph T. Laws, President of the Colonial School Board, asked how effects on the Colonial school district would be integrated in the plan. Dr. Rich answered that these implications will be incorporated in different sections of the report.

Margie Lopez Waite, expressed concern that the full interim report would not be available for Commissioners to review before public release. Dr. Rich replied that members would receive draft sections of the report as they are completed. He added that the full interim report may be available for members to review as early as November 12, 2015. Dr. Rich noted the process for public comment, noting that the Commission does not have to vote to endorse or not endorse the plan until December.

Several members also raised concerns about the tight schedule, stating that it would be difficult to review and comment before voting to release the draft. Dr. Rich reiterated that the Commission will have time to work on the interim draft before submitting the final report.

Members also voiced concerns about decisions made without the full Commission present. Dr. Rich reminded members that the Commission delegated certain responsibilities to committees for this exact purpose, and that all meetings are open to the public and the Commissioners are welcome to be present at both Redistricting and Funding Committee meetings.

Ralph Ackerman, representing the Brandywine School Board, agreed that this is a complicated process and assured members that everyone shares the concerns raised at this meeting. He testified to the progress made by the Redistricting Committee and encouraged members' patience in allowing the committees to address these difficult issues comprehensively and thoughtfully.

Dr. Rich reminded the Commission that the timelines and requirements have been imposed by legislative mandate, which also stipulate that the draft must be released

for public feedback before submission of the final report. He clarified that changes made between release of the interim and final drafts would not necessitate further public hearings.

Public Comment

A member of the public commented that the plan should not be made public without the support of the entire Commission. He urged members to develop plans to improve the quality of education for Wilmington students, concluding that failure to do so would constitute a failure to address the real disparities facing these students.

Mike Matthews, President of the Red Clay Education Association, raised his concerns with the rushed timeline. He voiced his belief that this process has been politically driven and does not allow adequate time for organizations to respond during public hearings. He stated his opposition to the Colonial School Board's recent vote in favor of continuing to serve Wilmington students.

Dr. Rich responded that in addition to public hearings, every written document submitted to the Commission electronically or in person will be included in the public record. In addition, minutes from every meeting have been recorded and made public. He outlined multiple options for submitting testimony and emphasized the Commission's commitment to considering all input before releasing a final report.

Joseph T. Laws, President of the Colonial School Board, responded that the Board made this decision based on performance data and are willing to consider expanding service to additional Wilmington students. He maintained that the students currently served by Colonial are performing well and should remain in the district.

Dr. Rich agreed that the schedule is tight, but he said that WEIC is forced by the law and by the State Board of Education requirements to act during this timeframe.

Commission Vice-Chair Elizabeth "Tizzy" Lockman adjourned the meeting at 6:01p.m.

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Attendance at the October 20, 2015 Meeting**

Commission Members

Ralph Ackerman
Eve Buckley
Nnamdi Chukwuocha
Rosa Colon-Kolacko
Karen Eller
Fredericka Jenner
Joseph T. Laws
Elizabeth Lockman
Margie Lopez Waite

Aretha Miller
Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Joe Pika
The Honorable Charles Potter, Jr.
Kenny Rivera
Vicki Seifred
Michelle Taylor
Breyonna Williams

Members of the Public

Laura Nash
Bill Doolittle
Kelli Racca
Wendy Lapham
Albert Shields
Emily Falcon
Jill Floore
Bob Silber
Kristin Dwyer

Alexis Fedorchak
Mike Matthews
Jacqueline Jenkins
Donato Rufo
Julie Noonan
Andy Hegedus
Henry Clampitt
Elnore Adams

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Elizabeth Burland
Liz Farley-Ripple
Neil Kirschling
Dan Rich
Kelly Sherretz
Kervin Zamora