

**SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
NEW BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

PRESENT: MR. LIVRAMENTO, MR. AMARAL, DR. FINNERTY, MR. NOBREGA, MS. POLLOCK

ABSENT: MAYOR MITCHELL, MR. OLIVEIRA

IN ATTENDANCE: DR. DURKIN, MR. DEFALCO, MRS. DUNAWAY (Recording Secretary)

The Special Meeting was called to meet with the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Commissioner Chester greeted the Committee and reviewed the itinerary he followed during the day as follows:

- Met with teachers and a group of parents at Parker School; Senator Montigny
- Visited New Bedford High School and observed classrooms with Dr. Durkin and Ms. Dawson; met with the Student Representative and a group of students and teachers
- Met with administrators and principals and had a dialogue after a brief address
- Met with staff at the Standard Times
- Met with Union President, Louis St. John

The Commissioner continued and commented on his observations. A summary follows:

Parker Elementary School shows promise but there is lots of work to be done. There is engaged learning and specialists are involved in classrooms to support instruction and those students who need extra help. The teachers are very positive and enthusiastic to work at a turnaround school. They are committed to the work and a school that had been struggling.

After meeting with approximately 10 parents, they seem to be quite positive about the culture at the school even though they were skeptical at first about the longer school day. They feel their children are doing quite well.

The Commissioner acknowledged that New Bedford High School has had lot of change and disruption. He visited various classrooms and observed strong engagement with students with an attitude of "Let's make use of every minute - bell to bell push".

The math department was having a planning session. Math teachers were looking at results and MCAS scores and looked at what students got wrong. Teachers are also working with colleagues to identify action steps.

The Commissioner is aware that all of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders will take PSATs in school. The district will have the option of a Wednesday or Saturday session. He is encouraged that the high school is taking on more challenging Advanced Placement work.

Students spoke on how they are being pushed; have more interaction, less dawdling and feel there is more teacher enthusiasm. They know the administration and the superintendent.

Approximately 15 teachers offered their experiences including the fact that last year was very trying and not an easy one. They are now hopeful where they and the high school is at this time. Teachers felt the administration was part of their team and students are showing up ready to work. They also feel that the district is focused on strengthening the program after lamenting how the pride of NBHS has eroded over time.

The Commissioner concluded that he didn't want to leave impression that the job is done but the table is set for great things to come.

Commissioner Chester responded to several questions from the Committee as follows:

Mr. Amaral: What do we need to do better?

Commissioner: Stay the course.

Mr. Amaral: When will you know when things are okay?

Commissioner: When NBPS is on a climb. Signs show tremendous potential to build capacity.

Dr. Finnerty: What does the DESE view as progress?

Commissioner: Great results with improving the graduation rate, lowering the drop-out rate; improving attendance with staff and students. A full package of results will be reviewed.

Ms. Pollock: What was the make-up of the student group?

Commissioner: There was great diversity, mostly seniors, four students representing the student advisory group, sophomore, junior, athlete/JROTC member. The Commissioner also was engaged with students in classrooms to speak with them about their day, what they were learning and the school itself.

Mr. Livramento: Any ideas/advice to the School Committee?

Commissioner: You have a superintendent that is on the right track. She has commitment, energy and back bone and is also smart about it.

He said there were no particular suggestions however, don't go in another direction.

Mr. Livramento: How do we give teachers the opportunity to have leadership roles?

Commissioner: Empowerment and results; clear expectations for accountability and improvement and give teachers room to grow and rise to the occasion.

Dr. Finnerty thanked Commissioner Chester as well as the DESE, including Andrea Condit and Pat Williams and for naming Dr. Durkin as receiver to Parker School.

Commissioner Chester stated that the School Committee made the right choice after leadership concerns. "You have a good school committee, mayor and superintendent."

A discussion continued with questions and comments related to MCAS and PARCC testing, funding for computers and technology and time spent on testing.

The Committee thanked the Commissioner for visiting and he replied that it is great to see good things!

Dr. Durkin gave an update to the Committee in regard to the security incident at Keith Middle School explaining that after an investigation was held, the administration was unable to identify an exact chronology of the alarm not functioning. Dr. Durkin went on to inform the Committee that the district has taken action with the personnel directly involved in the current Keith vandalism incident and moving

forward, all administrators within new Bedford Public Schools have been given explicit direction regarding their responsibilities concerning the report and follow through on any and all issues concerning the security equipment with their schools. Protocols have also been put into place with principals including testing the alarms on a scheduled basis.

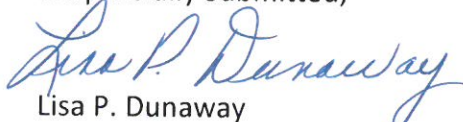
At 7:15 P.M., on a motion by Mr. Amaral and seconded by Ms. Pollock, the Committee voted to adjourn the Special Meeting.

The roll call vote was as follows:

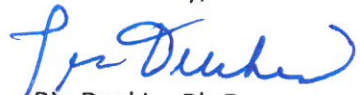
|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Mayor Mitchell – Absent | Mr. Amaral – Yes     |
| Ms. Pollock – Yes       | Mr. Livramento - Yes |
| Mr. Nobrega – Yes       | Dr. Finnerty – Yes   |
| Mr. Oliveira - Absent   |                      |

5 – Yeas      0 – Nays      2 – Absent

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Lisa P. Dunaway  
Recording Secretary

Reviewed by,

  
Pia Durkin, Ph.D.  
Superintendent,  
Secretary/School Committee

/lpd