

## **Wilmington Education Improvement Commission**

Community Education Building

Meeting Minutes – July 26, 2016

### **The meeting was called to order at 5:16 p.m. by Co-Vice Chairman Elizabeth Lockman.**

Elizabeth Lockman, Co-Vice Chair asked the each of the members of the Commission to introduce themselves, followed by members of the public.

### **Update from the Chair**

Dr. Tony Allen, Chair, began the meeting with a brief update. He noted an article by Larry Nagengast, of Delaware Public Media, provided the best summary on what happened. Dr. Allen gave the Commissioners and members of the public some context for the actions that took place into the morning of July 1. While they were all exhausted and disappointed at that time, he reminded the Commission to keep two things in mind. The Commission has been around for two years. Within those two years, there have been eight bills proposed, four of which have passed. Those four have been the first time the General Assembly has acted in sixty years in respect to the achievement gaps for low-income children in the city of Wilmington. While their action was not complete, but Dr. Allen stated that it is progress and dedicating two years trying to figure this out is not bad in the scheme of a 60 plus year battle.

Secondly, Tony Allen reminded the members of the public that the Commission is not simply redistricting – the action agenda is broader than that and outlined in both reports produced. That work is being done by all the committees represented today. Dr. Allen stated that the work within each committee, Charter and District Collaboration Committee; Funding Student Success Committee; Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee; and the Parent, Educator and Community Engagement Committee are fully functioning and making progress that is much broader than anything they can do under redistricting. With that said, Tony Allen stated that Wilmington's small population of students, 11,500 students, being separated into so many different governing units is still a problem, which Dr. Allen is committed to continue to work towards solving. Dr. Allen said that the outcome of this General Assembly is a step forward, but there is still a lot of work ahead of the team.

Dr. Allen commended the work of Red Clay and Christina School District for continuing to engage and genuinely push the Commission in the right direction. He noted that the Commission has benefited greatly from this engagement. Dr. Allen stated that this is still the most transparent public policy process on any matter in recent history and there is a lot to be proud of thus far.

### **Legislative Update**

Dr. Dan Rich stated that in the end, there were two pieces of legislation passed by the Delaware General Assembly. There were a number of actions initially taken by the House of Representatives, which approved a joint resolution (HJR 12) that would have constituted final confirmation of the State Board of Education's approval of redistrict. That was sent to the Senate, along with a companion bill (HB 424) which stipulated that the approval of HJR 12 did not constitute approval of any particular fiscal recommendations. Both House bills failed to pass the Senate. Instead, the Senate approved Senate Joint Resolution 17. Subsequently, the Senate

also passed Senate Bill 300. That bill was amended in the House to remove stipulations encumbering additional work by the Red Clay Consolidated School District, and instead allocating funding to the Commission to complete further analysis related to redistricting. The Senate and the House both passed both SJR 17 and SB 300 with HA 1.

SJR 17 confirms the approval of the redistricting plan by the State Board of Education, ensuring that the Commission does not have to repeat this process in the coming year. However, SJR 17 does not constitute the final approval by the General Assembly or the Governor; therefore, there needs to be further action with a new joint resolution next year, and action needs to be taken to approve the necessary and sufficient funding, in order for the plan to move forward to move forward.

Dr. Rich explained that Senate Bill No. 300 rewrites a portion of the initial enabling legislation. He highlighted the important aspect of Senate Bill 300's amendment, which will set up an arrangement to allocate \$200,000 to set up Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund, but eliminated the stipulation that the Red Clay Consolidated School District, in consultation with the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission and the Christina School District, shall assess the fiscal impact and related activities, and that would be subject to consideration and review by a working group, which then would make the recommendations to the legislature. Dr. Rich explained the implication of the amendment is that the allocation of funds still goes to the Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund to support the continued work of the Commission, which includes an analysis of the fiscal impact of redistricting.

#### **Dr. Allen opened up to questions from both the Commission or members of the public.**

Cathy Thompson, member of the Red Clay Consolidated School District Board of Education, asked if it was true that the Commission is dead. Dr. Rich replied that the Commission has a mandate until 2021, and none of the legislation has any impact on that mandate. Cathy Thompson asked a follow-up question about how the fiscal impact analysis would occur. Dr. Allen answered that the \$200,000 allocation is for purposes of analysis related to redistricting.

#### **Committee Research Update**

Dr. Dan Rich commended his colleagues at United Way for taking a lead role to identify and consolidate assets in support of public education. He explained United Way has been looking at what is happening elsewhere, identifying focal point institutions and alliances. He explained that Boston is an example that has reinforced the idea that it is necessary to mobilize all assets in the community, not only the schools themselves, to connect the pieces.

Dr. Rich explained that IPA is working on an inventory of state policies that impact low-income students. There are also efforts towards fiscal mapping to highlight efficiencies or inefficiencies in the system, and figure out how best to coordinate resources. He explained a similar analysis was done a number of years ago for early childhood education. They found 55 policies throughout 3 different responsible agencies and looked at how to consolidate effective policies.

Dr. Elizabeth Farley-Ripple, the Director of the Partnership for Public Education and Research director for the Commission, stated there also has been work on a range of issues, including asset mapping to determine where programs and resources are located in the city of Wilmington. This

included a range of issues, from food and nutrition, transportation, mental health services, and anything that is connected to student's well-being. She explained the next step will be to coordinate information that is currently available to map out the densities and holes in service delivery in areas that are relevant to public education in the city.

Dr. Dan Rich said that these efforts are integral part of the commission's work. This is a multi-step process. First to identify assets and examine the structure across all sectors. Then, he explained the next step is to examine what models exist to provide examples. And finally, he said, we can work towards a more coordinated and coherent service model.

Kelly Sherretz, Project Manager for the Commission at the Institute for Public Administration and Associate Director for the Partnership for Public Education, stated that Parent, Educator, and Community Engagement Committee has created a list of research questions to explore which includes best practices for engagement and methods of coordination, and will return in August to evaluate findings and work towards developing a set of recommendations.

Elizabeth Burland, Institute for Public Administration staff member, mentioned that the Charter and District Collaboration Committee has identified several barriers to successful and meaningful collaboration. These barriers for collaboration include the availability for time or opportunity; funding for collaboration; and topics to collaborate on. One proposal has been implementation statewide collaboration day or to start, a New Castle County collaboration day. Another primary proposal, which was developed out of a joint meeting with the Redistricting Committee, is to analyze data based on census tract, to identify communities of students rather than always looking at things from a school or district level. When the data is analyzed, and census tract communities are identified with the schools students go to, these teachers and administrators can get together and collaborate based on these communities of students. Work is underway at the Institute for Public Administration to identify ways in which this data can be analyzed to be of use for the committee.

Dr. Allen asked the chairs of the Charter and District Collaboration Committee, Eve Buckley and Aretha Miller, to give an update as well. He asked if this collaboration would be teacher-to-teacher only or have a broader scope. Aretha Miller answered that collaboration would be community-based and not just among the schools, including community resources which support students in that community. She also stated there is hope to have a joint meeting with members other committees including the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee to better coordinate efforts. She also noted the importance of involving the Boards of Education, the administration, and the teachers and administrators' unions in the conversations.

Eve Buckley added that there should also be incentives for the schools to be involved and there should be discussions among the school boards and possibly partnering with business to break down the mythical barriers and be to the advantage of every stakeholder.

Tony Allen asked the Honorable Nnamdi Chuckwuocha for an update on the City Council's proposal for an Office of Education and Public Policy, and funding proposals. He responded that there they are slowly moving due to the limbo with the current election cycle, but are still fully supportive of this initiative and hope to continue pushing it forward.

Elizabeth "Tizzy" Lockman noted that the Wilmington Education Strategy Think Tank (WESTT) has been looking at alternative funding initiatives as well.

Dr. Allen explained that the Commission will continue to fight for the necessary funding in the General Assembly, and addressed the concern that the funding is tied only to redistricting in Wilmington. He states this has never been the Commission's intention, yet he explains it has often been perceived that way. He stated next year's priority will be to create and implement a model of funding for the entire state that will be phased in over time.

Dr. Merv Daugherty, Red Clay Superintendent, raised a concern that Red Clay families are worried that the funding implications will fall on the tax payers of Red Clay, and that many question why would someone would support this change if it will force another referendum to raise taxes.

Dr. Allen responded that this is not the intention and it hasn't fallen on the shoulders of the school district. There needs to be a focal point to dismiss the perception that the Red Clay school district will pick up the cost. Tony Allen added that the narrative is not something the Commission espoused. He states that he respects the funding for all low-income in the state not only in Wilmington, and we need to find a way to change this before it is federally mandated.

**Representative Charles Potter, Jr. motioned to suspend the timetable for implementation of the plan** for redistricting of the school districts located in New Castle County (the "Plan") as set forth in the *Redistricting in City of Wilmington and New Castle County: A Transition, Resource, and Implementation Plan* pursuant to the Redistricting Resolution contained therein at pages 11-13.

**The motion passed with 16 yes, 0 no, and 6 absent votes.**

Yes - Ralph Ackerman, Tony Allen, Eve Buckley, The Honorable Nnamdi Chukwuocha, Karen Eller, Reverend Meredith Griffin, Frederika Jenner, Yvonne Johnson, Elizabeth Lockman, Margie Lopez Waite, Johnny Means, Aretha Miller, Harrie Ellen Minnehan, Joe Pika, The Honorable Charles Potter, Jr., Kenny Rivera.

Absent - Rosa Colon-Kolacko, Joseph T. Laws, Chandra Pitts, The Honorable David Sokola, Michelle Taylor, Breyonna Williams.

### **Commission Meeting Schedule**

Dr. Dan Rich, Elizabeth Burland and Kelly Sherretz proposed the third Tuesday of every month, starting in September, with the alternative day being the third Thursday of every month. A poll will be sent out to see the general consensus.

Dr. Allen mentioned that he plans to hold a retreat for the Commission to start off the year. At that retreat the Commission will develop a strategic plan for the year to come. There will be more details to come.

**Tony Allen opened up the floor for public comment.**

Cathy Thompson commented that the lack of concrete numbers about the necessary and sufficient funding causes concern. She mentioned that residents are scared that they will be left “holding the bag” and Red Clay residents will be more willing to support the plan if there are defined logistics. She was also concerned about the lack of communication directly to Red Clay residents.

Dr. Allen responded that the Commission would be happy to support communications to Red Clay residents as the Board and the district see fit.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission  
Meeting Attendance  
July 26, 2016**

**Commission Members**

Tony Allen	Karen Eller
Kenny Rivera	Johnny Means
Tizzy Lockman	Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Eve Buckley	Aretha Miller
Ralph Ackerman	Representative Charles Potter, Jr.
Joe Pika	

**Members of the Public**

Vicki Gehrt	Cathy Thompson
Merv Daugherty	Ty Jones
Bill Doolittle	Stephen Brady
Bob Silber	Tom Driscoll
Elizabeth Paige	Connor Bifferato
Albert Shields	Sophie Lockman
Adriana Leela Bohm	

**Institute for Public Administration Staff**

Elizabeth Farley-Ripple	Chester Holland
Dan Rich	Melissa Micek
Kelly Sherretz	Elizabeth Burland
Asha Chintala	