

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Hartford

The Legislation and Policy Development Committee

Wednesday, December 1, 2021, 8:30 a.m.

Malia K. Sieve, Chair

Donald F. Harris, Jr., Bonnie E. Burr, Karen Dubois-Walton, Robert Trefry, Elwood Exley, Jr.
and Martha Paluch Prou

Minutes

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Board of Education Legislation and Policy Development Committee met in person on December 1, 2021.

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Malia K. Sieve called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Also present were Committee members: Bonnie E. Burr, Karen DuBois-Walton, Elwood Exley, Jr., Donald F. Harris, Jr., Robert J. Trefry, Martha Paluch Prou, and Student Board Member Rishabh Bhandari

Also present were the following Department of Education staff members: Michael McKeon, Director of Legal and Governmental Affairs; Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer; Keith Norton, Chief Strategic Planning Officer; Laura Anastasio, Attorney, Legal and Governmental Affairs Office; and Eric Scoville, Communications Director.

Presenters:

Greenwich Board of Education Chair Kathleen Stowe and Dr. Toni Jones, Superintendent of the Greenwich Public Schools.

II. Approval of Minutes – November 3, 2021

The Committee unanimously voted to approve the minutes for November 3, 2021.

IV. Review and Discussion: Status of Greenwich Board of Education Racial Imbalance Plan

Representatives from the Greenwich Public Schools met with the Committee regarding the status of racial imbalance within its district. The Superintendent of the Greenwich Public Schools as well as the Chair of the Greenwich Board of Education discussed actions the Board has taken to address this issue. The Superintendent stated that the Board had taken aggressive action and that there had been “significant progress” in reducing the racial imbalance at New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue schools. The Superintendent and Board Chair noted the adverse effect of longstanding housing disparities, with most of the

affordable housing located in the western end of Greenwich, but they added that additional units were being planned for the Town, an unspecified percentage of which would be designated affordable housing. When asked by the Committee as to whether an analysis had been conducted to determine the effect that these proposed affordable housing units would have on the racial composition of schools, the Superintendent explained that much of this proposed development was still before the Town's Planning & Zoning Committee, and thus it was too early to run analytics.

In discussing the difficulty of achieving better racial balances in the affected schools, the Greenwich representatives repeatedly cited the length of time it takes to transport students from one side of Greenwich to the other and the need to ensure that the offerings at district magnet schools were attractive enough to get parents to commit to such lengthy commutes. Given such impediments, and noting that Greenwich had been out of compliance for a number of years, Committee members expressed concerns that Greenwich appeared to be relying solely upon parent choice with respect to balancing their student populations. The Committee also observed that while there had been progress at New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue, this had occurred only recently and that the racial composition at some of the district's other schools was more out of balance than it had previously been.

Noting that school district did not appear to have one, the Committee asked Greenwich to create a timeline for bringing its schools into compliance. It was also suggested that, as other school districts have done, Greenwich consider retaining consultants to assist it in coming up with options for addressing the racial imbalance.

The Committee requested that the Greenwich representatives return in six months with a timeline for achieving compliance, a map that showed the location of the district's schools, and information about the other schools within the district that are experiencing impending racial imbalances, including Parkway School, Old Greenwich School, and North Street School.

The Committee adjourned at 9:30 a.m.