**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

**of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Westford Academy**

**30 Patten Road, Westford MA**

**April 25, 2023, 9:05 a.m.–12:05 p.m.**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**Matthew Hills**, Vice-Chair, Newton

**Tricia Canavan,** South Hadley

**Darlene Lombos,** Boston

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Eric Plankey,** Westford, Student Member

**Paymon Rouhanifard,** Brookline

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Patrick Tutwiler**, Secretary of Education, Andover

**Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:**

**Martin West,** Newton

**Jeffrey C. Riley,** Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., and members introduced themselves. She announced that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) meeting, like all open meetings of the Board, is being [livestreamed and recorded](https://livestream.com/accounts/22459134).

**Public Comment**

1. **Senator John Cronin** addressed the Board on vocational-technical school admissions
2. **Patrick Lattuca, Ph.D., Superintendent, TEC Connections Academy Commonwealth Virtual School (TECCA),** addressed the Board on the use of remote proctoring for the MCAS assessment for Commonwealth Virtual Schools

**Comments from the Chair**

Chair Craven said the Board appreciates meeting at Westford Academy today, in honor of student Board member Eric Plankey. She noted upcoming meetings of Board committees: the Commissioner’s Performance Evaluation Committee, chaired by Vice-Chair Hills, will meet next month, and the Educator Diversification Committee, chaired by Mr. Rouhanifard, will meet on April 27. Mr. Moriarty, who chairs the Committee on Pandemic Recovery and Literacy, said that committee is mapping out a series of meetings and speakers.

**Comments from the Secretary**

Secretary Tutwiler said he is pleased to be back at Westford Academy, where he served as dean of students about 15 years ago. The Secretary highlighted Governor Healey’s recent announcements about new Innovation Career Pathway designations and Early College programs, both of which are part of the initiative to rethink and redesign the high school experience.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Commissioner Riley thanked the Westford Superintendent, Dr. Chris Chew, Principal Jim Antonelli, and Westford Academy staff for welcoming the Board and hosting this meeting, as the Board traditionally holds a meeting at the student member’s school. He commended Eric Plankey for his active participation as a Board member representing the voice of students. Commissioner Riley noted school visits he has made in the past month, the second annual educator job fair that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE) held, the recent Student Government and Advanced Placement (AP) Day at the State House, and his participation in the Outstanding Vocational Technical Student Awards ceremony. The Commissioner noted the Boston Public Schools is developing a coordinated plan and details will be forthcoming. He said DESE has been working on an Educational Vision document that he will bring to the Board this spring. Commissioner Riley announced the Department will be moving from its current location in Malden to Everett at the end of 2023. He commented that he recently attended the Arizona State University/Global Silicon Valley Conference on Education in San Diego, and he plans to bring information to the Board at future meetings about the impact of technology, cellphones and other devices, and artificial intelligence on education.

**Welcome from Westford Academy**

Superintendent Dr. Chris Chew and Principal Jim Antonelli welcomed the Board to Westford Academy. They commended Eric Plankey for his thoughtful contributions and advocacy as a student at Westford Academy and as a member of the Board. Board members applauded Mr. Plankey and thanked his parents and school officials.

**Approval of the Minutes of the** **March 28, 2023 Regular Meeting**

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of** **the March 28, 2023 Regular Meeting**

The vote was unanimous.

**Higher Education for Students with Disabilities: Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) – Discussion**

Jamie Camacho, DESE’s Director of Special Education Planning and Policy, Mary Price, the Department of Higher Education’s Director of MAICEI, and Salem State University MAICEI Project Coordinator Chris Lenahan presented a brief overview of the [Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative](https://www.mass.edu/strategic/MAICEI.asp) (MAICEI) and recent changes expanding higher education opportunities for students with disabilities. They explained that MAICEI is a state-funded program created in 2007 to support partnerships between school districts and public colleges and universities in Massachusetts, enabling eligible public high school students with intellectual disabilities to increase their academic and career success by being included in a college or university community of learners.

Joining the panel were Brian Heffernan, who spoke about his experiences as a student at MassBay Community College and his work at the Massachusetts State House for the past nine years, and Joxiah Pacheco, who is currently enrolled in the program at Salem State University. They each discussed how they have benefited from the opportunity to participate in inclusive courses and activities that have strengthened their academic, social, and career development.

Panel members responded to questions from Board members about expanding connections with employers, the role of coaches for individual MAICEI participants, and the capacity of the programs to serve more students. Board members applauded the students for their success. Chair Craven thanked all the presenters and acknowledged Julia Landau and others who advocated for this program over the years.

**2023 Milken Educator Award Recipient: Leigh Beson – Presentation and Discussion**

Chair Craven and Commissioner Riley introduced the state’s 48th Milken Educator Award winner, Leigh Beson, a teacher at Dighton Elementary School. Commissioner Riley explained that Ms. Beson is the only Massachusetts recipient for 2022-23 and is one of 35 recipients across the country this school year. He noted that the Milken Award recognizes exemplary elementary and secondary school teachers, principals, and specialists who are furthering excellence in education and comes with an award of $25,000.

Joining Ms. Beson for the presentation was Dighton-Rehoboth Regional Schools Superintendent Bill Runey and DESE’s Educator Preparation Associate, Grace Amalia Kingsbery. Ms. Beson, who has been a teacher since 2012, has taught first grade at Dighton Elementary School since 2018. She spoke to the Board about her journey into teaching and her focus on student-centered teaching and early literacy. Chair Craven and Board members congratulated Ms. Beson.

**Proposed Amendments to Educator Licensure Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00 – Initial Discussion and Vote to Solicit Public Comment**

Commissioner Riley explained that as part of the Department’s continuing effort to address educator staffing challenges while maintaining key qualifications, he is presenting proposed amendments to the Educator Licensure Regulations this month for initial discussion and a vote to solicit public comment. He explained that the proposed amendments would allow educators with Initial and Professional licenses to obtain Provisional licenses in certain fields; create a new grade span, PreK-2, for licensure as teacher of students with moderate disabilities and teacher of students with severe disabilities; permit applicants for Provisional licenses to meet a requirement by demonstrating knowledge as an alternative to taking a course or seminar; and create a new Provisional license for school nurses.

Jamie Camacho, director of special education planning and policy; Brian Devine, director of educator licensure; Liz Losee, director of educator effectiveness policy; and Lucy Wall of DESE’s legal staff responded to questions from the Board. In response to a question from Ms. Canavan about school nurses, Mr. Devine noted that the requirement to pass a communication and literacy skills test to receive an educator license is statutory.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 69, § 1B, and c. 71, § 38G, hereby authorizes the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, M.G.L. c. 30A, § 3, to solicit public comment on the proposed amendments to the Regulations on Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.00, as presented by the Commissioner.**

**The proposed amendments would allow Initial and Professional license holders to obtain a Provisional license in special education fields and English as a second language, create two new special education licenses at the PreK-2 level, allow an** **additional method for candidates to satisfy a licensure requirement, and create a new Provisional license for school nurses.**

The vote was unanimous.

Chair Craven called for a break at 10:35 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:50 a.m.

**Lawrence Public Schools Update – Discussion**

Deputy Commissioner Russell Johnston, Strategic Transformation Director Lauren Woo, Patricia Mariano, Interim Chair of the Lawrence Alliance for Education (LAE), and Juan Rodriguez, Interim Superintendent, presented an update on ongoing work relating to the Lawrence Public Schools turnaround plan and next steps anticipated for the LAE. Ms. Mariano and Mr. Rodriguez gave an overview of the district’s strategic priorities, implementation of its district-wide literacy plan, initiatives to continue diversifying the workforce, and efforts to improve attendance and family engagement. The presenters responded to questions from Board members about the governance structure; strategies to address early literacy and chronic absenteeism; and interaction among the LAE, the superintendent, and the Department. Commissioner Riley said the Department is creating a transition plan for the LAE. Chair Craven thanked the presenters and extended appreciation to Ms. Mariano for her ongoing leadership chairing the LAE.

**Education Budget Update: House Ways and Means FY24 State Education Budget**

Senior Associate Commissioner/CFO Bill Bell presented a brief overview of the House Ways and Means Committee’s FY24 state education budget recommendations. He explained that the House will complete its work on the budget this week, then in May the Senate will produce its budget recommendations; in June, a conference committee will be convened, and by late June or early July the Legislature will transmit its FY24 budget to Governor Healey. Mr. Bell also gave a short update on federal ESSER funding.

Chair Craven said as is stated in the posted agenda, this meeting includes an executive session. She recommended that the Board vote to go into executive session, in accordance with Mass. General Laws chapter 30A, section 21(a). Chair Craven explained that the purpose of the executive session is to discuss strategy with respect to litigation in pending matters involving the Board or Department, consistent with G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a)(3), as discussion of these matters in open session may have a detrimental effect on the position of the Board and the Department in litigation, and to discuss an Open Meeting Law complaint, consistent with G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a)(1).

Chair Craven added that as is stated in the meeting notice, the pending matters for the executive session are Family Freedom Endeavor, Inc. et al. v. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, et al. and Frigon et al. v. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, et al.; and an Open Meeting Law complaint filed April 3, 2023, for review per 940 CMR 29.05(5). Chair Craven called for a motion and said a roll call vote would be taken, as the law requires.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a), will enter into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation in pending matters involving the Board or Department (Family Freedom Endeavor, Inc. et al. v. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, et al., and Frigon et al. v. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, et al.), consistent with G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a)(3), as discussion of these matters in open session may have a detrimental effect on the position of the Board and the Department in litigation; and consistent with G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a)(1), to discuss an Open Meeting Law complaint filed on April 3, 2023.**

The vote, by roll call, vote was unanimous.

Chair Craven said a majority of Board members having voted in the affirmative, the Board would now go into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation in pending matters as listed and to discuss an Open Meeting Law complaint. She stated that the Board would not return to open session following the executive session. At 11:40 a.m., the livestream concluded, and Board members moved to the designated room for the executive session.

Mr. Rouhanifard left the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

**Executive Session**

In the executive session, which started at 11:50 a.m., General Counsel Rhoda Schneider introduced Deputy General Counsel Deborah Steenland, who briefed the Board on the pending litigation matters listed in the meeting notice and responded to questions from members. No votes were taken.

With respect to the Open Meeting Law complaint, Attorney Steenland reviewed with the Board the complaint’s allegations in accord with 940 CMR 29.05(5) and responded to questions.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education authorize its legal counsel to respond to the Open Meeting Law complaint on behalf of the Board.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

There being no further business, Chair Craven thanked legal counsel for the briefing and thanked Board members for attending the meeting. She asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:05 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote, by roll call, was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board