**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Tuesday, April 28, 2015**

**11:25 a.m. –1:45 p.m.**

**Fitchburg State University, Hammond Hall, Main Lounge**

**160 Pearl Street, Fitchburg, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Paul Sagan,** Chair, Cambridge

**David Roach**, Vice-Chair, Millbury

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**James Morton**, Springfield

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**James Peyser**, Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Donald Willyard**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Revere

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Chair Paul Sagan called the meeting to order at 11:25 a.m. He thanked Fitchburg State University for hosting today’s meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the March 23, 2015 Special Meeting and the March 24, 2015 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

Chair Sagan stated that the Board heard from 65 members of the Holyoke community at the special meeting in Holyoke last night, April 27. He declined to permit one additional person to speak about Holyoke at this morning’s meeting, to ensure fairness to all who followed the posted instructions about speaking opportunities. No speakers signed up to comment on other topics on the April 28 agenda.

**Commissioner’s Recommendation on Level 5 Status for Holyoke Public Schools**

Chair Sagan said the Board has spent months reviewing issues in Holyoke, along with the Commissioner, the Department, and the community. He said the Board’s special meeting last night was exceptional: 80-90 people signed up to speak; the Board extended the time and was able to hear from 65 members of the community. The Chair said the Board appreciated hearing from so many people. He noted that contrary to some statements made last night, receivership does not remove public governance from a school district. He said the Board believes in local governance and is operating under a legal framework that the elected Legislature adopted five years ago, calling for new tools to be used in schools and districts with chronic and repeated shortcomings. Chair Sagan cited a speaker from last night who said half of Holyoke’s entering class of 2015 would not be graduating this year. He said the question the Board must address is whether the current path will lead to the improvement everyone wants for the students of Holyoke, or whether Level 5 receivership is more likely to do so.

Secretary Peyser joined the Chair in thanking the hundreds of people who turned out last night in Holyoke. He said it was clear the speakers all care deeply about the city and its children. The Secretary noted three basic arguments that were presented: first, that state intervention is contrary to the principle of democratically elected government. Secretary Peyser said while local control is desirable, the state has the constitutional duty to educate all children. Second, he noted speakers wanted the superintendent to have more time to pursue his agenda. Secretary Peyser said the receivership statute offers tools for accelerated improvement, and the experience in Lawrence offers an example of effective partnership with the state and engagement of school leadership, staff, and parents. Third, he said some speakers asserted the Holyoke schools are doing the best they can, given the challenges of poverty. Secretary Peyser said the challenges are real, great schools can help students overcome the challenges of poverty, and the district needs more capacity than it can provide itself. He urged the Board to endorse the Commissioner’s recommendation.

Commissioner Chester said one of the first Board meetings he attended as Commissioner was held in Holyoke in 2008; the Board heard a review of the state’s initiatives in the district since it was identified as underperforming in 2003. The Commissioner said in 2008 the Board was developing an upgraded accountability and assistance system, instantiated in the 2010 Achievement Gap Act, which provides some extraordinary authority in a limited number of cases where low performance is persistent and pervasive. Commissioner Chester said he has watched Holyoke closely since 2008 and despite the Department’s engagement and support, Holyoke students are not substantially better off than they were in 2008 or 2003, which is distressing.

The Commissioner said his recommendation for receivership is not an indictment of the educators or superintendent; there are many strong educators in Holyoke. Rather, it is an indictment of the system in Holyoke which, despite its assets, has not been able to create a strong pathway for all students. Commissioner Chester said in 3rd and 4th grade, only 13-15% of students are meeting grade-level expectations in reading and writing, and only 28% are on grade level in math. He added that the data are very uneven for different groups of students, including at the high school level, with disparate demographics and results at Holyoke High School and Dean Vocational Technical High School.

Commissioner Chester said receivership triggers a planning process with local input from stakeholders. He said the plan would build on what is strong in the district, such as arts programs, Pre-K, dual language, and early literacy programs. He added that mass firings did not happen in Lawrence and will not happen in Holyoke; we need strong teachers and administrators to help design and implement the turnaround plan. Commissioner Chester said business as usual will not change the trajectory or bring about rapid improvement.

The Commissioner noted that speakers last night were concerned that receivership carries a stigma. He said Holyoke has a challenge with its image right now, and receivership may offer hope and opportunity to a lot of families, as we have seen in Lawrence. Commissioner Chester said he approaches receivership as a measure of last resort, the Department is ready to act expeditiously, and the children of Holyoke will be the beneficiaries.

Chair Sagan invited comments from Board members.

Ed Doherty said people know his background and that he holds the labor seat, and he intends to vote against receivership for Holyoke because it strips away bargaining rights and due process for teachers. Mr. Doherty said he is disappointed the Legislature put this into law. He said he does not believe collective bargaining is a barrier; almost every teacher in Massachusetts works under a collective bargaining agreement and we are the best education state in the country. Mr. Doherty noted that hundreds of people showed up last night, scores testified, and 90% of the speakers were opposed to state receivership and expressed support for the new superintendent who is making improvements and needs more time. Mr. Doherty said the Board should listen to the public and give the district more time rather than imposing receivership, which is supposed to be a measure of last resort.

Donald Willyard said he would have voted for receivership 19 months ago before the new superintendent came in, but now Holyoke is turning around on its own and the state should support it. Mr. Willyard said he visited schools in Holyoke and has doubts about the district review because he saw schools making good use of technology, contrary to the report. He said the district has made substantial improvements, including gains on MCAS results, and this year’s MCAS scores are likely to show further gains. Mr. Willyard said he cannot support receivership because the district is improving under its current leadership and the superintendent should have more time.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado said she went to Holyoke last night with an open mind to hear from the community. She said as a non-native speaker of English, her heart sank every time she heard speakers blame the problems on students’ lack of English proficiency, poverty, or lack of a decent home. Dr. Calderón-Rosado said as the product of caring adults and teachers, as a former teacher, and as the mother of two Latino boys, she has a lot of skin in this game even though she is not a resident of Holyoke. She noted that 79% of the children in Holyoke are Latinos. She said in her work as CEO of Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción, she is involved in a bilingual preschool program, afterschool and summer programs that help students become proficient in English, and is a founding member of Margarita Muñiz Academy in Boston. Dr. Calderón-Rosado said the children served in those settings have the characteristics mentioned at the hearing – limited English language proficiency, low income, homelessness – and those descriptors are not an excuse for any of the programs but rather are the motivation for the programs to do well. Dr. Calderón-Rosado said she found some remarks last night insulting and condescending towards the children of Holyoke. She said the district has had enough time to set things straight and the children deserve better. Dr. Calderón-Rosado said receivership is the way to start anew and proceed with a great sense of urgency, and she will vote for it.

Margaret McKenna asked about the difference between 3rd and 10th grade reading scores. Commissioner Chester responded that the grade 3 and 4 standards are generally stronger and also the grade 10 results may reflect attrition of students who dropped out in grade 9 or 10. Ms. McKenna asked about Dean Vocational Technical High School’s recent history. The Commissioner said Dean was in the first cohort of 35 schools that were identified in spring 2010 as underperforming (Level 4) schools under the Achievement Gap Act, and was one of the few that continued to struggle after three years in that status. Commissioner Chester said at that point, he told the district that receivership was possible and invited the district to propose a different approach. He said the Department identified some potential partners as in Fall River, Boston, and Springfield, and the district initially contracted with a local educational collaborative as a turnaround partner for Dean. Commissioner Chester said that relationship got no traction, the partnership dissolved, and the district then contracted with Project GRAD. Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston said this is the first year of full implementation of the GRAD model, and the superintendent has proposed a new plan for Dean. In response to a question from Ms. McKenna, the Commissioner said he will provide data on charter schools in Holyoke.

James Morton said he went into last night’s meeting wanting to be convinced that receivership was not needed and wanting to support Superintendent Paez and his efforts to improve student outcomes. He said it is notable a person of color is leading the district, and he also has great respect for Paul Hyry. Mr. Morton commented that only 16 of the 65 speakers were Latino, and only a few speakers spoke about children who are not being well served. Mr. Morton said he grew up in poverty and knows that children growing up in poverty can succeed. He said that as a student and later as a teacher in Springfield, he experienced and witnessed the transformative power that strong educators and a strong educational program can have on students. Mr. Morton said he feels compelled to support the needs of the children who are not being well served, because education is one of the only ways to break the cycle of poverty. He said he feels a moral imperative to vote in favor of receivership. Mr. Morton said he is confident that the best practices Dr. Paez has brought to Holyoke will continue under receivership. Mr. Morton said it is unacceptable that half the children in Holyoke are not graduating from high school, and for all these reasons he will vote in favor of receivership.

Vice-Chair Roach said the 1993 Education Reform Act shifted more resources to the neediest districts; the state provides at least 80% of Holyoke’s school funding through Chapter 70 so of course the state Board has a significant responsibility and interest in how the Holyoke schools perform. He noted that some speakers last night said the district needs more resources, and while that might be so, to suggest the Board has no role beyond that misunderstands the Board’s obligations. Vice-Chair Roach said he understands the opposition that speakers expressed as well as their view of recent progress under the current superintendent, and yet the recurring theme of the speakers reminded him of 30 years ago, when many people disregarded the students who were not succeeding in school. With the transformation of the economy over the last 30 years, he said, we have a responsibility to prepare all students for success, including children who are poor or are learning the English language or have other challenges. The Vice-Chair said the Board needs to intervene in order to meet its obligations. He expressed concern about disparities between the two high schools in Holyoke, with Holyoke High School preserving the academy while Dean takes a far different demographic of students and is profoundly underutilized. Vice-Chair Roach said the disparities are unacceptable, particularly in a state trying to expand tech options. He said the district’s inability to get the schools functioning well raises real issues, and while the current superintendent has done a commendable job, the path forward is receivership.

Katherine Craven said the 1993 Education Reform Act provided billions of dollars of funding and support to districts in return for accountability. She said receivership offers tools and is not a hostile takeover. Ms. Craven said she was troubled by the repeated references last night to poverty and ELL students and the need for more resources. She noted that other districts, not just Lawrence, are proving these impediments can be overcome. Ms. Craven said clear, consistent communication will be vital to the success of the receivership. She said the receivership should capitalize on the forward momentum of Supt. Paez and his team. She suggested creating an advisory board of business people and community leaders to help the receiver, who should be an individual with a strong track record. Ms. Craven said if this is done right as a collaborative partnership, Holyoke will be a success story ten years from now.

Penny Noyce said the Board heard a great deal of pride from the Holyoke speakers last night, generally expressed as “My kids did well” or “I did well” rather than “All of our students do well.” She said Holyoke is a divided city, which is reflected in the two high schools and in who was present or not present last night. Ms. Noyce said the 1993 Education Reform Act responded to great inequities in the Commonwealth’s schools and was a grand bargain to increase resources to poor cities in return for accountability for results, and Holyoke was a major beneficiary. She said the state has tried various measures over the years without significant improvement and bears responsibility if the situation continues as it is. Ms. Noyce said the strong programs that speakers identified, including programs for students with autism and AP courses, could continue under receivership. She said the superintendent and leadership team have initiated some promising ideas that can lead to improvement but they have not yet taken root in the schools. Ms. Noyce said she will vote for receivership. She said the choice of receiver and the process for developing the plan, ensuring that many voices are heard, will be very important.

Mary Ann Stewart said she visited Holyoke schools earlier and spoke with students, teachers, administrators, and parents; she saw students engaged in learning, good use of technology, and other positive signs. She encouraged other Board members to visit. Ms. Stewart said the superintendent has a plan and has been implementing it for 18 months. She said we need urban solutions to urban problems and advocated a holistic approach that includes cultural competency and low- to moderate-income housing. Ms. Stewart said the Holyoke School Committee will continue to work for the children of Holyoke and she intends to vote no on receivership.

Margaret McKenna said she will vote for receivership with great concern about doing it well. She said poverty is not an excuse but is a reality that calls for holistic solutions beyond extending the school day, including nutrition, medical care, and more options for educating English language learners. Ms. McKenna said the community was skeptical about the Department's previous interventions and about the process and timing of the district review. She said despite her reservations, she will vote yes because the Board has a significant responsibility for Holyoke and all its students, and we will not see change without significant intervention. Ms. McKenna said the Department should build a partnership with the community and local organizations.

Dr. Calderón-Rosado said the data from this morning's joint meeting with the Board of Higher Education validate her decision to vote yes: 58% of Holyoke high school graduates who went on to MA state colleges required remedial courses. She said the state's intervention in Holyoke over the past 12 years has been piecemeal and fragmented, whereas now we have the opportunity to take a holistic approach. She said Lawrence is a good example of a tailored approach, and she is confident we will have an approach that is tailored for Holyoke.

Chair Sagan said he has learned a lot over the past several months; he respects the work Supt. Paez and his team are doing and believes the good work should be continued and accelerated. The Chair said he will vote for receivership. He said last night was one data point and reflected heartfelt views though not necessarily of the whole community. Chair Sagan said while the district has made some recent improvements, they are too little and time has run out. He said too many students are being failed by the district and the level of student achievement and growth is just not acceptable. The Chair said he does not accept the notion of blaming students and their families because they are poor or do not speak English or are homeless, because students with similar characteristics are succeeding in schools that work, that have the right set-up and leadership and are able to make rapid improvements, and the students’ lives change for the better. Chair Sagan said when the choice is between the interests of the adults and the interests of the children, he will always choose the side of the children. Chair Sagan said the Commissioner will be accountable for the turnaround plan and the Board expects to see steady progress. He invited Board members to make a motion.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Mass. Gen. Laws chapter 69, § 1K, and 603 CMR 2.06, having considered all required factors (including the findings of the district review team, multiple quantitative indicators of district quality, and comments presented by school district and municipal officials, representatives of teachers, parents, and other interested parties), and having reviewed and discussed the Commissioner’s recommendation, hereby declare the Holyoke Public Schools to be a chronically underperforming (Level 5) district and direct the Commissioner to take action consistent with law as needed for the benefit of Holyoke students, including appointment of a receiver for the district.**

The vote was 8-3-0. Mr. Doherty, Ms. Stewart, and Mr. Willyard voted in opposition.

Commissioner Chester said he approaches this work with a great sense of humility and urgency. He encouraged Holyoke officials to view this as an opportunity to work together for the young people of the city.

Mr. Willyard said he would like to have the Commissioner recruit and appoint the receiver with final approval by the Board. Chair Sagan asked the Commissioner and General Counsel to comment. Commissioner Chester said the receivership statute assigns to the Board the identification of the receiver and assigns to the Commissioner the responsibility for overseeing the receivership. He said the Board deliberately adopted regulations delegating the hiring of the receiver to the Commissioner and counsel would explain the rationale. He noted some downsides of having the Board make the appointment: it could happen over the summer when the Board does not meet, potential candidates might not apply, and it would cause delays.

General Counsel Rhoda Schneider said the 2010 Achievement Gap Act amended Mass. General Laws chapter 69, section 1K, which authorizes the Board to declare a district chronically underperforming (Level 5). She said the statute states that the Board will designate a receiver, and also that the receiver reports directly to the Commissioner. Ms. Schneider said in April 2010, after a period of public comment, the Board adopted a regulation that reconciles those provisions; specifically, it says, “Following the placement of a district in Level 5 under 603 CMR 2.06(1)(b), the commissioner, on behalf of the Board, shall appoint a receiver for the district pursuant to M.G.L. c. 69, § 1K(a).” She explained that the Board’s rationale for having the Commissioner make the appointment reflected the practical reasons he had stated: this is an administrative matter that the Board delegates to the Commissioner. Ms. Schneider said it is a personnel action, whereas the Board is a policy board. She said the Board’s role in personnel actions is to choose the Commissioner and hold him accountable.

Chair Sagan said the regulation does not appear to leave room for Mr. Willyard’s suggestion. Ms. Schneider said the Board could amend the regulation if it so chooses, via the process required by the Administrative Procedure Act. Chair Sagan said that is not on the table today and he would not propose it because it would lead to uncertainty and is unnecessary given the regulatory history that the Board now understands. He said in any event it would not be appropriate; the Board can hold only one person accountable, and that is the Commissioner. Chair Sagan said he senses Mr. Willyard’s fundamental point is that the Board has made a big decision and wants to be sure it goes well. Mr. Willyard said based on the discussion he would withdraw his suggestion. Secretary Peyser said he assumes the Commissioner will be consultative as he makes his decision. The Commissioner agreed.

Ms. Craven asked about the process and timeline for convening the Local Stakeholder Group. Commissioner Chester referred to the steps outlined in his memo and said the LSG will be convened within 30 days. He said he will notify the district in writing of the Board’s action and will keep the Board informed through updates at the Board’s monthly meetings and between meetings. In response to a question from Ms. McKenna, Commissioner Chester said he will notify city officials that he will be the interim receiver in the short run and will appoint someone to be in Holyoke 24/7 for operations, and that no budgetary, contractual, collective bargaining, or personnel decisions should go forward without the assent of the interim receiver. He said he and Department staff will be in Holyoke in the next few weeks to meet with school and city officials, faculty, parents, and others. Senior Associate Commissioner Johnston said the Board’s vote today enables the Department to start the process right away, convening the Local Stakeholder Group this spring to help prepare for the start of the new school year.

**Proposed Regulations on Autism Endorsement for Educator Licensure, 603 CMR 7.00**

Commissioner Chester said the proposed regulations stem froma state law enacted in 2014, which directs the Board to establish a teacher license endorsement in autism in order to meet the educational needs of students on the autism spectrum. He said with the Board’s approval, the Department will invite public comment on the proposed regulations and then bring them back to the Board for final adoption in June 2015.

**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-1/2, as amended by Chapter 226 of the Acts of 2014, hereby authorize the Commissioner to proceed in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, 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 establish standards for the Autism Specialist Endorsement.**

The vote was unanimous.

Ms. Stewart asked if there is a plan to review all state education regulations. General Counsel Schneider responded that Governor Baker recently issued an executive order directing all executive branch agencies to review their regulations over the next year, and the Department is participating in that review. Chair Sagan asked the Commissioner and General Counsel to update the Board on the review as it proceeds.

**Update on Level 5 Schools**

Senior Associate Commissioner Johnston said the Board has received the third FY2015 quarterly progress report on the Level 5 schools (Paul A. Dever Elementary School and UP Academy Holland in Boston, John Avery Parker Elementary School in New Bedford, and Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke). He gave a brief overview and responded to questions.

**FY2016 Education Budget Proposal from House Ways & Means Committee**

Commissioner Chester said the Board received the House Ways & Means Committee’s proposed FY2016 education budget, which is now before the full House. Chief Financial Officer Bill Bell gave a brief summary in relation to the Board’s budget priorities. He said the Senate Ways & Means Committee’s budget will be released in mid-May.

Chair Sagan said the Board is holding the first of five PARCC forums this afternoon, starting at 3 p.m. He said these are not formal Board meetings, although several members will be present.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 1:45 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board

**Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the**

**Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education**

**Tuesday, April 28, 2015**

**9:10 a.m. –11:00 a.m.**

**Fitchburg State University, Hammond Hall, Main Lounge**

**160 Pearl Street, Fitchburg, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Paul Sagan,** Chair, Cambridge

**David Roach**, Vice-Chair, Millbury

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**James Morton**, Springfield

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**James Peyser**, Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Donald Willyard**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Revere

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Higher Education Present:

**Chris Gabrieli,** Chair

**Maura Banta**

**Nathan Gregoire**

**Sheila Harrity**

**Nancy Hoffman, Ph.D.
Tom Hopcroft
Donald R. Irving
Dani Monroe
James Peyser,** Secretary of Education **Fernando M. Reimers
Henry Thomas III
Paul F. Toner**

Member of the Board of Higher Education Absent:

**Stacey DeBoise Luster, Esq.**

**Richard Freeland,** Commissioner of Higher Education, Secretary to the Board

Board of Higher Education Chair Chris Gabrieli called the joint meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. He thanked President Robert Antonucci for hosting the two boards at Fitchburg State University. President Antonucci welcomed the members to the campus. Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Chair Paul Sagan said the boards are proud of educational successes in Massachusetts and are always looking for ways to improve public education through collaboration. Secretary James Peyser said we have a collective responsibility to overcome obstacles and fulfill aspirations for all students in Massachusetts.

**Dimensions of K-12 and Higher Education Collaboration**

1. **Overview and Discussion of Cross-Sector Initiatives**

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) Commissioner Mitchell Chester and Department of Higher Education (DHE) Commissioner Richard Freeland distributed handouts and presented an overview of several K-12/high education collaborations and joint initiatives, including the joint definition of college and career readiness adopted by both boards, early college experiences for high school students, Pathways initiatives, and school-to-college data reports. The commissioners responded to questions from board members. Commissioner Freeland said public higher education campuses are experimenting with alternatives to Accuplacer to see if more students can succeed in credit-bearing courses.

Commissioner Freeland said expanding early college/dual enrollment programs is a priority. Chair Gabrieli said it would be important to set specific goals for expanding programs and suggested considering different strategies as well since the dual enrollment program could be viewed as having taxpayers pay twice. Chair Sagan thanked the commissioners for pulling together the information and noted both boards are concerned about the number of students who enroll in but do not complete their higher education programs.

1. **PARCC: Overview and Discussion**

Commissioner Chester, ESE Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson, and Commissioner Freeland gave a presentation on ESE-DHE collaboration to build the next-generation state student assessment. Commissioner Chester said one-quarter of MA high school graduates do not enroll in college within 16 months of graduating from high school, and over one-third of high school graduates who enroll in MA public higher education (and 65% in community colleges) require remedial courses. He said MCAS, while well regarded in its 18th year, is a grade 10 test and is not designed to show students’ readiness for higher education. Commissioner Chester reviewed the history and rationale for Massachusetts joining the PARCC consortium and said PARCC will give students and families clear signals along the way about the student’s readiness for the next level. Commissioner Chester and Commissioner Freeland explained the roles of the two boards in relation to policy decisions relating to PARCC and timelines for decision-making.

Deputy Commissioner Wulfson gave an overview of studies that are being conducted to inform the two boards in their decision-making. Secretary Peyser said in addition, Governor Baker has launched a series of public hearings on PARCC around the state under the auspices of the Board of ESE, the first of which will take place this afternoon. Secretary Peyser said the Governor also directed the Secretary to assemble an expert panel to evaluate PARCC research and determine whether more is needed, as part of the open public process to ensure that Massachusetts remains a leader on standards and assessment.

Commissioner Chester responded to questions from members of the boards. He said raising the cut score on the grade 10 MCAS tests is not a viable option because it is only a grade 10 test and many students are already scoring at the proficient and advanced level. Commissioner Chester said if the Board of ESE decides in the fall of 2015 to adopt PARCC, then later the Board of ESE would decide what standard on PARCC tests would qualify students for the high school competency determination. He noted that MCAS will continue to be the competency determination standard through the class of 2019. Commissioner Chester said the Board of Higher Education would decide what standard on PARCC tests would qualify students for entry into credit-bearing college courses. On the question of cost, Commissioner Chester said PARCC looks to be less costly per student than MCAS although there are many variables. Board Chair Sagan said the boards and others will need to know the actual cost. Deputy Commissioner Wulfson responded to questions about administration of PARCC tests online vs. on paper. He said more data on that issue will be available in the fall.

Chair Sagan said the boards welcome more information and public input on PARCC. He and Chair Gabrieli thanked the presenters and commended the interagency collaboration.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and Board of Higher Education adjourn their joint meeting at 11:00 a.m., subject to the call of the Chairs.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board of ESE

**Minutes of the Special Meeting**

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

**Monday, April 27, 2015**

**4:05 p.m. – 8:35 p.m.**

**Holyoke War Memorial Building**

**310 Appleton Street, Holyoke, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

**Paul Sagan,** Chair, Cambridge

**David Roach**, Vice-Chair, Millbury

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, Milton

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**James Morton**, Springfield

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**James Peyser**, Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Donald Willyard**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Revere

**Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. He welcomed members of the Holyoke community to the special meeting to present their views to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on the Holyoke Public Schools and the Commissioner’s recommendation for Level 5 status. He asked Commissioner Chester to make an opening comment. The Commissioner said his recommendation is based on concern for the future of young people in Holyoke and the persistent and pervasive low performance of the district. He said receivership does not mean mass firings or privatization but it is different from business as usual. Commissioner Chester said if the Board endorses his recommendation, he would name a receiver in the next two months, convene a local stakeholder group to help guide development of a turnaround plan, and begin implementing it in the fall. He said he makes his recommendation with a profound sense of responsibility to everyone in the community, especially to the students.

Chair Sagan invited public comment from the audience. The following individuals addressed the Board on the Holyoke Public Schools and the Commissioner’s recommendation for Level 5 status:

**Invited Officials and Representatives:**

Mayor Alex Morse

State Senator Donald Humason

State Representative Aaron Vega

Superintendent Sergio Paez

School Committee Vice-Chair Devin Sheehan

School Committee Member Dennis Birks

City Councilor Todd McGee

Holyoke Teachers Association President Gus Morales

Parent Representative Kelly Przekopowski

**Holyoke Parents and Families:**

Tahara Baldwin

Libby Hernandez

Gary Enright

Alana Shirley

Paul Lusignan

Juan Vidal Martinez

Christine LaBoursoliere

Erin Brunelle

Tricia Roy

Elizabeth A. Butler

Sarah McIntyre

Sandra Harnois

Michael Moriarty

Christine Valois

Attorney Nyles Courcha

Paula Burke

Josie Porter

Bobby Stanton

Mary McAndrew

**Holyoke Students:**

Jovonnie Marnero

Verenyse Vargas

Nayarit Mendez

Shaniyah Torres

Jesús A. Rivera

Finn Montalvo

Summer Kaeppel

Zachary Torres

Corey Edwards

**Holyoke School Staff:**

John Breish, Sullivan Principal

Karyn McDermott

Gia Santaniello

Anna Rigali

Mark Ostroff

Mary Brazeau

Amy Drohan

Yari Rodriguez

Andrew Verrocchi

Angela Thatcher

Carol Hepworth, Director of Special Education

**Holyoke Community Members:**

Dr. Sonia Pope

Tamara Lawrence

Darlene Elias

Dean Nimmer

Kimberly Beauregard

Beth Brogle

Helen A. Florio, Executive Director, Holyoke Taxpayers

Kathleen Anderson, President, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce

Susan Van Pelt

Gladys Lebron-Martinez, Holyoke City Councilor

Hazel Rosario

Lorraine Gurham

Barbara C. Bernard

Mike Sullivan

John McAndrew

Daniel Glanville

Shelley Whelihan

Joe McGiverin, Holyoke City Councilor

James Leahy, Holyoke City Councilor

Chair Sagan thanked the many members of the Holyoke community who attended the meeting and expressed their views. He said Board members value all the comments and will take into account all the information they have received as they consider their decision.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board