**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Tuesday, January 26, 2016**

**10:25 a.m. – 2:10 p.m.**

**Roxbury Community College, Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center**

**1350 Tremont Street, Boston, MA**

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**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

**Member of the Board Absent:**

**Roland Fryer**, Concord

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 10:25 a.m.

Commissioner Chester said *Education Week* recently released its annual Quality Counts report and for the second year in a row ranked Massachusetts first overall, first on the publication's K-12 Achievement index, and first on the publication's Chance for Success Index for the ninth consecutive year. He said the Department is releasing statewide educator evaluation data today. Commissioner Chester said the student discipline regulations that the Board adopted in 2014 are having a positive impact, according to the data: districts reported about 10,000 fewer students were suspended in 2014-15 than in 2013-14. He also commented on the Board’s regulations on use of restraint, which took effect on January 1, 2016; his New Year’s message to schools on the Every Student Succeeds Act; the Board’s annual report; and his letter to the U.S. Department of Education regarding a high-risk designation.

**Comments from the public:**

1. Gloria Daniels, parent, addressed the Board on Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School
2. Aisha Barnes, parent, addressed the Board on Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School
3. Francis Inoa, parent, addressed the Board on Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School
4. Sheana Duncan, parent, addressed the Board on Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School
5. Zulek Perez, parent, addressed the Board on Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School
6. Marie Duviela, parent, addressed the Board on Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School
7. Francis Vigeant, Chief Executive Officer of Know Atom, addressed the Board on the Science and Technology/Engineering Standards.

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Moriarty noted a correction to the minutes of the December 15, 2015 meeting. The minutes have been corrected.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the December 15, 2016 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Southbridge Public Schools**

Commissioner Chester said he has little confidence that Southbridge can solve the district’s problems on its own. He said student performance and learning gains are very low, and leadership and governance turnover has been outrageous. Commissioner Chester said he is recommending a Level 5 designation to take effect immediately. He said if the Board votes to designate the district as Level 5, the Department would move expeditiously to convene a local stakeholder group and appoint a receiver. Chair Sagan said the district is falling far short of providing students with a high quality education. He said taking over the district is a challenge and once we embark on it, we cannot fail. In response to the Chair’s question, Commissioner Chester said he expects to receive several viable proposals for receiver and should be able to announce an appointment by the February Board meeting. He added that in the meantime, he would serve as interim receiver.

In response to Ms. Stewart’s question regarding the district’s accelerated improvement plan, Commissioner Chester said Southbridge educators have received little to no guidance for teaching and learning and the district is constantly changing initiatives and programs. Mr. Willyard said the people of Southbridge said they want a receiver to come in and address the district’s problems, especially in leadership, and as the representative of students he will vote for it. Ms. Stewart said it was a privilege to hear from the community, and most were in support of the state coming in to help. She said she will support the Commissioner’s recommendation.

Mr. Moriarty said he appreciated the public hearing and heard a high degree of solidarity among the teachers, parents, and students that they need assistance. He said he will support the recommendation and that he favors an individual receiver, not an organization. Ms. McKenna said she has heard much about the needs of the students and believes there is no other option but to follow the Commissioner’s recommendation, as it is the right thing to do.

Vice-Chair Morton said sixty percent of the Southbridge community members who testified at last night’s special meeting asked for assistance, and he will support the Commissioner’s recommendation. Ms. Noyce said she was struck by the testimony from the community, and she will support the recommendation.

Mr. Doherty said he is opposed to the law that allows the Commissioner or receiver to take away collective bargaining rights of teachers. He said he recognizes the dysfunction in Southbridge, and he will abstain from the vote.

Ms. Craven recalled hearing from the community in 2005-06 when she was at the Massachusetts School Building Authority. She said the new school building was not a panacea for the district’s problems, and there is a disconnect between how the district uses its resources and the needs of the students. She said she hopes this will be one of our faster receiverships.

Secretary Peyser thanked Commissioner Chester and his team for their leadership on this matter. He said this action is long overdue and as the community members made clear last night, a state partnership is essential. The Secretary said he would not rule out the possibility of having an organization rather than an individual serve as a receiver. Secretary Peyser added that the response the Board heard from the Southbridge community reflects our track record of success in Lawrence and Holyoke.

Chair Sagan said today’s vote should not rush the selection of a receiver, and the Board should be open about the type of receiver. He added that the Board is compelled to act today, especially after hearing from the community last night.

**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 Southbridge Public Schools to be a chronically underperforming (Level 5) district, effective immediately, and direct the Commissioner to take action consistent with law as needed for the benefit of Southbridge students, including appointment of a receiver for the district.**

The vote was 9-0-1. Mr. Doherty abstained.

**Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School: Commissioner's Recommendation to Revoke Charter**

Commissioner Chester briefly summarized the information in his memo and noted that the Board has received additional information from the school. He said Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School (DCA) is a low-performing school with high attrition of students and staff. He said after reviewing the data and visiting the school, he has little confidence that the leadership has the capacity and capability to bring about substantial improvement.

Chair Sagan invited Board members to direct questions to the Commissioner and Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang. In response to a question from Ms. Stewart, Commissioner Chester said until recently, the school reported a low number of special education students, so it was not receiving an additional increment in payments. Mr. Chuang noted that the Board placed DCA on probation two years ago, in lieu of revocation. He said the Department had given DCA the benefit of the doubt on student data reporting and allowed the school to make data corrections with respect to students in special education and English language learners.

In response to a question from Dr. Noyce, Mr. Chuang said the Board has closed 12 charter schools over the years, and under current regulations students from a charter school that has closed have equal access to other charter schools. He said if the Board votes to revoke DCA’s charter, the Department will immediately work with the parents, the Boston Public Schools, and other Boston charter schools to help families with the transition to other school options.

Ms. Stewart said she does not feel she has enough information to support revocation. Mr. Willyard asked about the charter revocation appeal process. General Counsel Rhoda Schneider responded that the Commissioner is recommending that the Board vote its intent to revoke the charter. The school has the right to appeal, and if it chooses not to do so within the specified time, the Board’s vote on revocation becomes final. The matter would come back to the Board only if the school chooses to appeal today’s decision, in which case the appeal would go to a hearing officer and then the hearing officer’s report would be presented to the Board for a final decision.

Chair Sagan invited the school’s representatives to address the Board. Robert Gaudet and Charles Cassidy, Chair and Vice-Chair of the DCA Board of Trustees, and Bob Flynn, Headmaster, presented to the Board. Mr. Flynn said the school has been serving a high-needs population and described DCA’s counseling program. Mr. Cassidy said the trustees have recruited good people to the board and have made progress on governance, facilities, and infrastructure. He said DCA is prepared to make a leadership change if that would keep the school open, and in any event, the board will do everything possible in the next six months to provide a smooth transition for the students. Mr. Gaudet asked the Board to find a solution that does not involve closing the school.

Ms. McKenna said she applauds the school’s goals but is not convinced the school has a student population dramatically different from the Boston Public Schools. She said she holds charter schools to a high standard: they should be significantly better than district schools. She added that if the Board votes to revoke the charter, the Department must work on the transition with the parents and the Boston Public Schools.

Secretary Peyser thanked the school’s founders and acknowledged their leadership and effort. He said Bob Gaudet has been a pioneer in the difficult work of starting a charter school – and because it is so difficult, not every charter school succeeds. Secretary Peyser said charter schools provide choices to parents, but they are about offering significant improvement and the Board does indeed set a high bar for performance. He said the stories the parents presented are very moving and the Board understands closing a school is serious. He noted that the Board placed the school on probation two years ago. The Secretary said the fundamental issue is student results, and while DCA has made some improvements, they are not commensurate with the needs. Secretary Peyser said he will reluctantly support the Commissioner’s recommendation and that if the charter is revoked, the Department should work quickly to help parents understand their options for next year.

Mr. Willyard said he visited DCA and is not convinced the school can turn itself around. He said he will vote to revoke the charter. Mr. Doherty said he also visited the school and saw teachers and students engaged in learning. He said although he does not favor expanding charter schools, revocation of DCA’s charter would do unnecessary harm. He noted that the school is Level 2 and advocated giving it more time to improve.

Mr. Flynn responded to questions from Dr. Noyce about student recruitment and attrition. Mr. Moriarty commented that if DCA brings in a new leader now, that could result in further staff attrition. Mr. Flynn said he has agreed to step aside if doing so would save the school. Mr. Cassidy said the board of trustees would manage any leadership change.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89; General Laws chapter 30A, section 13; and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby states its intent to revoke the public school charter granted to the Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School effective June 30, 2016, based upon the information presented by the Commissioner.**

**Provided, that the revocation of the charter shall be conditional on the right of the board of trustees of the Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School to request an administrative hearing in accordance with General Laws chapter 30A, section 13, and 801 CMR 1.00; provided further, that any such request for a hearing shall be in writing, addressed to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board), and must be received within 15 days of the school’s receipt of the notice of the Board’s January 26th action. If the Board does not receive a request for a hearing from the school within the 15-day period, the Board’s conditional action on revocation of the charter shall become final at the end of the 15-day period.**

**The board of trustees of the Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School shall comply with all procedures and timelines established by the Commissioner to effectuate said revocation including, but not limited to, those specified in 603 CMR 1.12(8). Provided, further, that the Board authorizes the Commissioner to impose such conditions on the school and on its board of trustees, in accordance with 603 CMR 1.12 (1), as he determines are necessary to enable the school to complete the current school year.**

The vote was 6-4. Vice-Chair Morton, Mr. Doherty, Dr. Noyce, and Ms. Stewart voted in opposition.

Ms. McKenna left the meeting at 12:30 p.m. The Board took a ten-minute break.

**State Graduation and Dropout Results for 2014-15**

Rob Curtin, Director of Data Services, presented the latest graduation and dropout results. He said the state’s four-year graduation rate improved for the ninth consecutive year (87.3 percent) and the state’s annual dropout rate declined to 1.9 percent. Mr. Curtin said all major subgroups improved their four-year graduation rate, and urban school districts made the largest gains in reducing the number of dropouts. In response to Secretary Peyser’s question, Mr. Curtin said the positive results can be attributed to districts’ focus on all students; creating multiple pathways to graduation, including credit recovery and alternative schools; the state’s early warning indicator system; and the graduation initiative with select districts to share best practices and fund credit recovery coaches.

**Proposed Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards**

Commissioner Chester said he is asking the Board to vote to solicit public comment on the proposed Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) Standards, which will be voluntary for districts. He said the Department will invite broad public input through early April, make any necessary edits, and then bring the final revised DLCS standards to the Board for adoption in June 2016.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Chapter 69, Sections 1B, 1D, and 1E of the Mass. General Laws, authorize the Commissioner to solicit public comment on the proposed voluntary *Digital Literacy and Computer Science Standards*.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Adoption of 2016 Science and Technology/Engineering Standards (STE)**

Chair Sagan said the revision of Massachusetts STE standards has been a very collaborative process and the final document incorporates a great deal of comment from the public as well as Board members. He thanked Secretary Peyser and Penny Noyce for their work and feedback on the draft standards. Secretary Peyser thanked the Department staff for their assistance and collaboration. He said the standards aim to balance knowledge with practice and enhance student engagement in science and technology/engineering. He added that the standards establish a baseline, not a ceiling, and teachers and students are encouraged to go beyond them, particularly in high school courses.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with Chapter 69, Sections 1D and 1E of the General Laws, approve the *2016 Science and Technology/Engineering Standards*, and direct the Commissioner to incorporate the standards into the *2016 Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework* and distribute copies to the Joint Committee on Education for their information, and to public schools and other interested parties throughout the Commonwealth for use in improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment in science and technology/engineering.**

**Further, that the Board extend its appreciation to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and to the many individuals and groups statewide that helped to revise and strengthen the Science and Technology/Engineering Standards.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Amendment Request of Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School**

Commissioner Chester said the school is requesting, and he is recommending, approval to formally add grade PK to the school's current grade span of serving grades K-6, to better align to the grade configuration of Cambridge Public Schools and codify a two-year Kindergarten program the school has been implementing. He noted that the school’s maximum enrollment would not change.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby amends the charter granted to the following school, as presented by the Commissioner:**

**Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School (grades served changed from K-6 to PK-6)**

**Location: Cambridge**

**Maximum Enrollment: 350**

**Grades Served: PK-6**

**Effective year: FY2016**

**The charter school shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89; 603 CMR 1.00; and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such conditions as the Commissioner or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education may establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the charter.**

The vote was unanimous.

**South Shore Charter Public School: Expansion Amendment Request**

Commissioner Chester said the regional charter school is requesting an enrollment increase from 610 students to 1,075. He said the school is strong and its charter has been renewed four times. Commissioner Chester added that he recently visited the school and is very impressed with its degree of dissemination, approach to diverse learners, and work to educate students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The Commissioner noted testimony in opposition from the Superintendent of the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00, hereby amends the charter granted to the following school, as presented by the Commissioner:**

**South Shore Charter Public School (enrollment increase from 610 to 1,075)**

**Location: Norwell**

**Charter Region: Abington, Braintree, Brockton, Cohasset, Duxbury, East Bridgewater, Halifax, Hanover, Hingham, Holbrook, Hull, Kingston, Marshfield, Norwell, Pembroke, Plymouth, Plympton, Quincy, Randolph, Rockland, Scituate, Weymouth, Whitman-Hanson**

**Maximum Enrollment: 1,075**

**Grades Served: K-12**

**Effective year: FY2017**

**South Shore Charter Public School shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00 and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such additional conditions as the Commissioner may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the charter.**

The vote was 7-2. Mr. Doherty and Ms. Stewart voted in opposition.

**Information on New Charter Applicants and Proposed Charter Amendments**

Commissioner Chester said the Department received 10 Commonwealth charter school prospectuses in August 2015 and received final applications to establish five charter schools in November 2015. He said two of the seven applicant groups initially invited to submit final applications decided not to pursue a charter, and the applicant group for the proposed Central Square Public Charter School decided to withdraw its final application and is no longer under consideration, so four applicants remain. In response to a question, Associate Commissioner Cliff Chuang explained the requirements around approving charter schools in districts in the lowest ten percent of performance.

Commissioner Chester gave a brief overview of the charter amendment requests. He said the Department received requests from nineteen existing schools or networks of schools to change their maximum enrollment or grades served, including eleven requests from Boston schools. He outlined the review process for amendment requests.

**Progress Report on Civic Learning and Engagement**

Commissioner Chester introduced David Buchanan of the Department’s Curriculum and Instruction Office. Mr. Buchanan outlined the Department’s progress in implementing the working group’s recommendations. He said the Department is conducting outreach to potential members for the newly formed task force that will draft recommendations for a preliminary strategic plan to promote civic learning; planning a statewide Literacy Conference, Integrating History, Social Studies, and Civics; and has developed a timeline and proposed budget for the review and revision of the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework, as well as a proposed timeline to re-establish the statewide assessment in history and social science. Secretary Peyser said he assumes the Department is looking to make incremental adjustments to the framework rather than overhaul the standards, and said he hopes the timetable to review the framework and start the assessment program can be accelerated. Senior Associate Commissioner Brooke Clenchy responded that the Department plans to engage with the field soon, and those discussions could help refine the timetable. Secretary Peyser asked the Commissioner to bring this topic back to the Board for further discussion after the first phase of soliciting input.

**Update on Holyoke Public Schools**

Commissioner Chester said he visited the district recently and the Department has been actively engaged there, including at the Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP). He said new staff are making progress and repairing relationships with students, but there is still much improvement to be made. In response to Chair Sagan’s question, Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston said the report on TIP describe the results of the investigation and with the changes that have been made, he believes students are no longer at risk. In response to Mr. Moriarty’s question, Mr. Johnston said the district is cooperating with the Department of Children and Families. Ventura Rodriguez, special assistant to the Commissioner, said the district has commissioned an outside review of its special education program; student, staff, and family surveys are being administered; meetings were held with parents to discuss the restraint regulations; and school-based teams are working on operational plans.

**Update on Level 5 Schools**

Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston summarized the second FY2016 quarterly progress report on the four Level 5 schools: UP Academy Holland and Paul A. Dever Elementary School in Boston, Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke, and John Avery Parker Elementary School in New Bedford. Chair Sagan commented that he hopes the Department is developing the organization and capacity to capture what we are learning from our work with these Level 5 schools.

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 2:10 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 Board of Higher Education**

**Tuesday, January 26, 2016**

**8:35 a.m. – 10:05 a.m.**

**Roxbury Community College, Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center**

**1350 Tremont Street, Boston, MA**

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**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

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

**Roland Fryer,** Concord

**Members of the Board of Higher Education Present:**

**Chris Gabrieli, Chairman**   
**Sheila M. Harrity, Ed.D., Vice-Chair   
Nancy Hoffman, Ph.D.**   
**Tom Hopcroft**   
**Robert E. Johnson, Ph.D.**   
**J.D. LaRock, J.D., Ed.D.**, Community College Trustee Representative   
**Dani Monroe**   
**James Peyser,** Ex Officio   
**Fernando M. Reimers, Ed.D.**   
**Henry Thomas III, J.D.,** University of Massachusetts Trustee Representative

**Paul F. Toner, J.D.**   
**Owen Wiggins**, Student Member

**Member of the Board of Higher Education Absent**:

**Donald R. Irving,** State University Trustee Representative

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. and welcomed members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Board of Higher Education, and the public. Roxbury Community College President Valerie Roberson welcomed board members to the campus.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Chair Sagan invited Higher Education Commissioner Carlos Santiago and Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester to present an overview of the proposed revised definition of College and Career Readiness, Incorporating Civic Learning. Commissioner Santiago said in March 2014, the Study Group on Civic Learning and Engagement of the Board of Higher Education (BHE) recommended including civic learning as an expected outcome for their students. He said the BHE later adopted a statewide policy directing public colleges and universities to incorporate civic learning as an expected outcome for undergraduate students.

Commissioner Chester noted that in 2013 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and the BHE came together to discuss, and each later adopted, the Joint Definition of College and Career Readiness, as part of the boards’ ongoing collaboration. He said in 2015 the BESE endorsed the recommendation of its Working Group on Civic Learning and Engagement to add civic learning to the joint definition. Commissioner Chester said the two agencies have worked in partnership to address the recommendations of their working groups. Chair Sagan said the BESE has had several discussions on civic learning and has made clear that it is a priority.

Members of the two boards offered comments on the proposed revised definition. Secretary Peyser said an understanding of U.S. history is foundational to civic learning and engagement; he encouraged more articulation on this point within the revised definition, as well as a reference to respect for freedom of speech and thought. Mr. Johnson said the goal is for students to see themselves as participants in civic life and suggested the definition emphasize civic participation. Mr. Willyard said the State Student Advisory Council has participated in this work. Chair Sagan thanked members for their comments and said each of the two boards will continue the discussion and each will vote on the revised definition at one of their regular meetings.

BHE Chair Gabrieli introduced the topic of early college. He said the boards began a discussion on early college at their last joint meeting in March 2015, and the two departments have been collaborating to develop a policy framework to expand high school students’ access to dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities. Commissioner Santiago outlined guiding questions for a policy discussion. Commissioner Chester said most high schools in Massachusetts offer some form of early college programming such as Advanced Placement courses, International Baccalaureate, articulated coursework, and dual enrollment. He encouraged the boards to consider the goals of a state policy on early college.

Dr. Reimers said early college is a critical issue and should be expanded to as many high school students as possible, in partnership with industry to expand capacity. Mr. Morton said early college programs can have a transformative impact on students with the greatest challenges. Secretary Peyser said Governor Baker has announced the doubling of dual enrollment programs in the proposed FY2017 budget. He said they are looking for high leverage, scalable models that integrate high school-college-career pathways. Chair Gabrieli said a working group of the board chairs, commissioners, and secretary will address these issues and report back to the boards later in this calendar year, if possible.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and Board of Higher Education adjourn the meeting at 10:05 a.m., subject to the call of the Chairs.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Minutes of the Special Meeting**

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

**Monday, January 25, 2016**

**4:45 p.m. – 7:20 p.m.**

**Southbridge Public Schools Administrative Offices, Auditorium**

**25 Cole Avenue, Southbridge, MA**

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**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 Absent:**

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Roland Fryer**, Concord

Chair Sagancalled the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m. He thanked members of the Board and the public for attending this important meeting to hear from the community regarding the Commissioner’s recommendation to designate Southbridge as a Level 5 school district. He said the Board’s duties are grounded in state law and constitutional rights and the Board takes its responsibilities seriously, putting the interests of students and families first. Chair Sagan said the Achievement Gap Act of 2010 provided the framework for the Commissioner to recommend that the Board determine a school district is chronically underperforming and place it into receivership.

Commissioner Chester thanked parents, staff, local officials, and other concerned residents for attending. He summarized the reasons set forth in his memo for recommending that the Board place Southbridge in receivership. He said Southbridge was identified as an underperforming district twelve years ago, and despite many efforts, the district’s student results are still very low in literacy and math achievement and student growth rates, and the district has had an astounding turnover in leadership. Commissioner Chester said if the Board chooses to designate the district as Level 5, he will act quickly to appoint a receiver and a local stakeholder group. He said he intends to build on the community’s assets, including capable staff in Southbridge who are willing to make the shift from business as usual. He said if the Board places Southbridge in receivership, the district and community should view this as an opportunity for the students.

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

**Tim Connors**, Southbridge Interim Superintendent

**Scott Lazo**, School Committee Chair

**Joan Sullivan**, Southbridge Education Association President

**Esteban Carrasco**, Town Council Chairman

**Ron San Angelo**, Southbridge Town Manager

**Cynthia Nalia**, Parent

**Bill Bishop**, School Committee Member

**Miriam Kranz**, Educator

**Michael Stoliker**, Student

**Rebecca Sweetman**, Educator

**Ron Bashan**, Educator

**Michael Estrada,** City Councilor

**Kerry Walker**, Parent

**Maritza Knight**, Educator

**Jose Cartagena**, Community Member

**William Cote**, Community Member

**Joseph Dao**,Parent

**Paul Zoto**, Community Member

**Jessica Valez**, Parent

**Severina Rios**, Parent

**David Williams**, Teacher, Vice-President of Southbridge Educators Association

**Julie Beausoleil**, Parent

**Dan Snyder**, Educator

**Jayna Sims**, Parent

**Mike Marketti**, Community Members

**Melissa Earls**, Principal of Southbridge Middle-High School

**Rose Reith**, Community Members

**Lynda Shoup**, Educator

**Judy Cournoyer**, Educator

**Rebecca Trucheon**, Community Member

**Sara McNeill**, Community Member

**Mike Montigny**, Community Member

**Christina Melvin**, Parent

**Stephanie DeMartino**, Parent

**Sheri Nieuwenhoff**, Parent

**Susan Grant**, Educator

**Crystal Adorno**, Parent

**Mildred Ingles**, Community Member

**Lisa Rousseau**, Southbridge Public Schools Employee

**Kim Dolan**, Community Member

**Sarah LaVergne**, Parent

**Brent Abrahamson**, Community Member

Chair Sagan thanked the many members of the Southbridge 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 7:20 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

1. Several members were delayed in arriving. BESE: Katherine Craven arrived at 8:50 a.m., Donald Willyard arrived at 9:00 a.m., and Mary Ann Stewart arrived at 9:50 a.m. BHE: Henry Thomas arrived at 8:45 a.m., Nancy Hoffman arrived at 8:50 a.m., Dani Monroe arrived at 9:00 a.m., and Chairman Gabrieli arrived at 9:05 a.m. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)