**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

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

**Tuesday, May 23, 2017**

**9:35 a.m. –12:25 p.m.**

**Scituate High School, Performing Arts Center**

**606 Chief Justice Cushing Highway, Scituate, MA 02066**

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

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

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Nathan Moore**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Scituate

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**James Peyser,** Secretary of Education

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

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

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Jeff Wulfson,** Deputy Commissioner, attended the meeting on behalf of **Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and offered the Board’s good wishes to Ms. Craven, who was not in attendance due to recently giving birth. Chair Sagan then invited Scituate School Superintendent John McCarthy to address the Board.

**Welcome from Scituate High School**

Superintendent McCarthy welcomed the Board to Scituate. He highlighted the new performing arts center, which he said was completely funded by the town and shows the community’s commitment to the arts. Superintendent McCarthy said he will be retiring in June and is pleased that the Board is holding its meeting in this new facility.

Chair Sagan thanked Superintendent McCarthy for his thirty years of service to the students of the Commonwealth and invited Scituate High School Principal Robert Wargo to address the Board. Principal Wargo welcomed the Board to the high school and congratulated Nathan Moore for his service on the Board.

Chair Sagan invited State Representative James Cantwell, State Representative Joan Meschino, and Lou Rizzo from the Office of State Senator Patrick O’Connor, to speak. They each congratulated Mr. Moore on his achievements as a student and as a member of the Board, and presented citations to Mr. Moore from the House of Representatives and the State Senate.

**Comments from Chair**

Chair Sagan asked Vice-Chair Morton to comment on the Board’s Monday evening gathering, at which the three Level 5 district receivers presented progress reports on their turnaround efforts. Vice-Chair Morton commended the receivers and the Department staff for their work with the districts. Ms. Noyce said she is impressed by the receivers’ focus on teaching and learning and on secondary school redesign. Vice-Chair Morton noted that even though the process leading to receivership is exhaustive, the receivers commented that only after being in the district on a daily basis for a while did they see how deep the systemic issues were.

Ms. Noyce reported on behalf of the Committee on the Commissioner’s Performance Evaluation. She said the committee has reviewed the Commissioner’s self-evaluation; interviewed the Commissioner’s direct reports, Board members (except Ms. Craven), and the three district receivers; and is on track to present its recommendation to the Board in advance of the June 27 meeting.

Ms. Stewart informed the Board that she is running in a special election to fill the Fourth District seat left vacant by the death of State Senator Donnelly. The primary is on June 27. Ms. Stewart said she sought guidance from the State Ethics Commission and the Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF) to be sure any activities she engages in during the campaign are consistent with her responsibilities as a member of this Board. She said she has followed and will continue to follow the guidance she received from the Ethics Commission and OCPF, and she will seek and follow further guidance as needed. Ms. Stewart said she values her service on this Board and will continue to carry out her responsibilities with careful attention to the state ethics and campaign rules and with a focus on the students and families we serve.

Mr. Moriarty reported on his participation in the recent National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) meeting at which a number of states convened to discuss issues related to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation. Mr. Moriarty said Massachusetts is in a strong position to respond to ESSA because of our well developed system of curriculum frameworks, assessment, accountability, and high expectations. He said the meeting was a great opportunity to share information and ideas and hear from other states. Chair Sagan thanked Mr. Moriarty for participating in the NASBE meeting on behalf of the Board.

**Comments from the Commissioner**

Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson delivered the Commissioner’s report. Mr. Wulfson noted that Sydney Chaffee, a ninth grade humanities teacher at Codman Academy Charter School in Boston and 2017 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, has been selected as National Teacher of the Year. Ms. Chaffee is the first National Teacher of the Year from Massachusetts in the award's 65 years of existence. Mr. Wulfson said Cara Pekarcik from North Quincy High School was recently announced as the 2018 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. Board members are invited to attend the 2018 Teacher of the Year awards ceremony at the State House on June 15.

Mr. Wulfson briefly discussed the recommendations from the Office of the Child Advocate, which led an interagency working group to review the administration of the state’s public and private day and residential schools and substantially separate programs for students with disabilities. He reported on the second annual Conference on Civic Engagement and Learning, sponsored by the Department and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate, which was held on May 8 at the EMK Institute. Mr. Wulfson said the public comment period on proposed amendments to the educator licensure regulations ended on May 1; the Department is reviewing all comments received and will present final recommendations to the Board at the June 27 meeting. He noted that the Department recently released the charter school waitlist report for the coming year. Mr. Wulfson informed the Board that the Department resubmitted the ESSA state plan to the U.S. Education Department (USED) on May 10 after USED’s initial review and request for additional information. He said this process of negotiation, clarification, and revision is typical with state plans under various federal programs.

Mr. Wulfson called the Board’s attention to the memo from Commissioner Chester to school officials explaining the changes to 2017 accountability reporting. Mr. Wulfson also noted: the results from the Department’s VISTA survey of superintendents and principals; the recent meeting on effective summer learning models which included Board members McKenna, Morton, and Moriarty; correspondence between the Black Educators’ Alliance of Massachusetts and the Department; and the recent move of the Department of Higher Education’s Office of Student Financial Assistance to 75 Pleasant Street, Malden.

Mr. Wulfson summarized recent activity concerning the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School dress code policy and said the Department is working with the Attorney General’s Office and the charter school to resolve this matter. In response to Ms. McKenna’s question about a Boston Globe article, Mr. Wulfson addressed an inaccuracy in the article and said the Department is not typically involved in reviewing or approving school dress code policies. Chair Sagan added that the Board is the authorizer of charter schools but is not the administrator of the schools; each school’s board of trustees runs the school and is accountable for its governance and operations.

**Comments from Secretary**

Secretary Peyser discussed his recent visit to the Forest Park Middle School in Springfield with Governor Baker to observe the turnaround work taking place through the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership. Secretary Peyser said the Empowerment Zone allows school leaders and teachers to make decisions for their individual schools and is a very promising model.

**Statements from the Public:**

1. Gerry Mroz, parent, addressed the Board on the Early College Initiative
2. Stephanie Davolos, Regional Director – New England, Gateway to College National Network, addressed the Board on the Early College Initiative
3. Matt Cregor, Education Project Director, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, addressed the Board on Mystic Valley Regional Charter School policies

**Approval of Minutes**

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

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the April 18, 2017 regular meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.**

The vote was unanimous.

**Next-Generation MCAS: Update and Review of Standard Setting Process**

Mr. Wulfson said he is pleased that eighteen months after the Board’s very significant decision in November 2015 decision to establish the Next-Generation MCAS, the tests are being administered successfully. He congratulated the Department’s Student Assessment team for all their work on this initiative. He invited Michol Stapel, Associate Commissioner, and Bob Lee, MCAS Chief Analyst, to provide an update on the MCAS program and the standard setting process. Ms. Stapel informed the Board that the testing window for grades K-8 ends on May 26, and approximately 245,000 students will have completed computer-based testing. She added that it has gone smoothly and early participation rates are at 98-99%.

Mr. Wulfson said work is already underway to design the Next-Generation MCAS grade 10 tests, with the plan to do field testing in spring 2018. In response to a question from Ms. Stewart, Ms. Stapel said schools typically have a testing window of 11-13 days so they have flexibility in scheduling. Mr. Wulfson said the broader testing window accommodates the administration of computer-based testing, and the window may shrink as testing moves to tablets and laptops.

Ms. Stapel presented an overview of the Next-Generation MCAS milestones and considerations in standard setting. She explained that for standard setting, the Department will convene a panel of educators to review the test items and student responses and make recommendations to the Commissioner on the appropriate cut score for each level of achievement. Ms. Stapel described the process for selecting and convening the panel of educators with a broad range of experience and expertise, noting that applications for panel membership will close on May 24.

Ms. Stapel and Mr. Lee provided an overview of standard setting activities. Mr. Lee explained the role of content experts, the panelist judgment process, and how ratings produce proposed cut scores. He said the process is designed to vet the recommendations that will be brought to the Commissioner and provide confidence that the recommendations are sound.

Secretary Peyser said the standards need to be fair and accurate, and need to be perceived as such. Ms. Noyce added that student performance at one grade should indicate whether the student is on track to succeed at the next grade level, so the progression makes sense to parents and educators. Mr. Moriarty urged that the panel not lower expectations about grade 3 reading. Mr. Wulfson said the Board will receive an update on the standard setting in September, with results in October. Ms. Noyce asked if the Department could make the MCAS test available to Board members if they are interested.

Vice-Chair Morton followed up on Secretary Peyser’s comment, saying the fairness and accuracy of the process must be communicated to the public. Ms. Stapel said public presentations have been held and will continue. Chair Sagan said a deliberate communications strategy will be vital, particularly for parents. Secretary Peyser added that the score reports for students and parents should be helpful, not judgmental. Chair Sagan thanked the presenters for their good work and said the Board looks forward to an update in September.

**Early College Initiative: Update from the Early College Joint Committee**

Mr. Wulfson invited Keith Westrich, Associate Commissioner; Nyal Fuentes, College and Career Readiness Coordinator; and Jennifer Gwatkin, Early College Coordinator, to provide an update on the Early College Initiative. Mr. Westrich presented background on the joint resolution that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and Board of Higher Education (BHE) adopted in January 2017 to establish a formal early college designation process and an Early College Joint Committee (ECJC) to oversee the development of the criteria and application process for designating Early College High Schools. Mr. Westrich reviewed the five key design principles of an early college high school. Mr. Fuentes explained the process for preliminary and final designation, structured around the five guiding principles, and said the ECJC will meet on May 31 to decide on its recommendation to the BESE and BHE. The Board will discuss and vote on this matter at the June 27, 2017 meeting.

Chair Sagan asked if the plan is for each board to accept the same motion. Mr. Wulfson said yes, and we will coordinate with the BHE ahead of the June meetings. Ms. Gwatkin outlined next steps, including the timeline for designation of Early College High Schools. Mr. Westrich said there is a lot of interest in the field and the Department plans to offer technical assistance. Ms. Noyce asked what Massachusetts can learn from other states. Mr. Westrich said Texas and North Carolina have some useful models. Secretary Peyser noted that the Early College program needs an ongoing finance strategy, and this is an item to consider for the FY2019 state budget.

**State Student Advisory Council End-of-Year Report for 2016-2017**

Nathan Moore briefed the Board on the End-of-Year Report that he will submit in June on behalf of the State Student Advisory Council (SSAC). Mr. Moore said the SSAC worked closely with the regional councils throughout the year and focused on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), student mental health, dropout legislation, school climate, and a proposal to update the health education curriculum. Mr. Moore said he communicated with SSAC members on various items pending before the Board including charter school matters, ESSA, and educator licensure, to be sure his votes at Board meetings reflected the views of his fellow council members. Chair Sagan thanked Mr. Moore for his work on the Board and said the students have had a real influence, for example, on the Board’s work on civic learning and engagement.

**Update on FY2018 State Education Budget**

Bill Bell, Senior Associate Commissioner for Administration and Finance, informed the Board that the Senate Ways and Means Committee (SWM) has released its recommended budget. He summarized key points in the SWM budget. Mr. Bell explained that after the Senate budget debate concludes, the budget will go to Conference Committee where the anticipated downturn of projected state revenue will likely influence the final recommendations. Mr. Bell added that on the federal side we anticipate consistent funding for the coming school year, although the proposed federal education budget for FY19 has several large reductions. Mr. Wulfson said the uncertainty about the state budget is challenging for districts as well as state agencies.

**Proposed Schedule for Regular Board Meetings through June 2018**

Chair Sagan asked members to review the 2017-2018 proposed Board meeting schedule and to notify him as soon as possible if any of the dates pose a problem. He said the Board would vote on the dates at the June 27 meeting.

**Proposed Amendment to Board By-laws on Remote Participation**

Chair Sagan reviewed the memo outlining the proposed amendment to the by-laws of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to allow members to participate remotely in meetings under certain circumstances, as permitted by the Open Meeting Law. Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel, was present to answer questions. Chair Sagan reviewed the permissible reasons, minimum requirements, and procedures for remote participation. He added that under the proposed by-law, Board members may participate remotely in no more than one regular meeting and one special meeting per calendar year, all requests are subject to approval by the Chair (or by the Secretary if the request is from the Chair), and no more than one member may participate remotely in any regular or special meeting.

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

**VOTED:** that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the following amendment to its by-laws:

**Article II. Meetings of the Board** is amended by adding the following section:

**Section 8. Remote Participation**

1. Board members are strongly encouraged to be physically present at meetings.
2. To the extent consistent with the Open Meeting Law and the Attorney General’s regulations (940 CMR 29.00), a Board member, including the Chairperson, may participate remotely in no more than one regular meeting and one special meeting per calendar year. All such requests are subject to approval by the Chairperson; provided that any such request from the Chairperson is subject to approval by the Secretary of Education. If the Chairperson is participating remotely, the Chairperson shall not preside over the meeting.
3. Any member who wishes to participate remotely must, as soon as reasonably possible prior to a meeting, notify the Chairperson or, in the Chairperson’s absence, the Vice-chairperson, of the member’s desire to do so and the reason for and facts supporting the request.
4. Permissible reasons for participating remotely are limited to the following: (i) personal illness; (ii) personal disability; (iii) emergency; (iv) military service; or (v) geographic distance, provided that the member is outside of Massachusetts on the scheduled meeting date. The Chairperson or Secretary may grant an exception to (v) based on the circumstances.
5. No more than one member may participate remotely in any regular or special meeting of the Board.
6. Remote participation depends on video conferencing technology being available and working at the meeting site and at the location from which the member is participating. The member is responsible for testing the video technology in advance to be sure it works. If technical difficulties with the video occur during the meeting, the member may participate remotely via audio and will be counted as in attendance at the meeting.

The vote was unanimous.

Chair Sagan voiced his appreciation to Scituate High School for hosting the meeting.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:25 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 Special Meeting**

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

**Monday, May 22, 2017**

**5:05 p.m.–6:30 p.m.**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

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

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

**Ed Doherty**, Boston

**Nathan Moore**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Scituate

**Pendred Noyce**, Boston

**James Peyser,** Secretary of Education

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

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke

**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

**Russell Johnston**, Senior Associate Commissioner, attended the meeting on behalf of **Mitchell D. Chester**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Vice-Chair Morton called the meeting to order and announced that due to the lack of a quorum, this would be considered a gathering of Board members. Vice-Chair Morton introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, who was attending on behalf of the Commissioner.

Mr. Johnston introduced the three Level 5 district receivers: Jeff Riley (Lawrence Public Schools), Stephen Zrike (Holyoke Public Schools), and Jessica Huizenga (Southbridge Public Schools). Each delivered a short presentation on implementation of their district turnaround plans, including an overview of their district's priorities, key initiatives, and outcomes to date.

Mr. Riley said his presentation would be a brief update to the presentation he made to the Board in March 2017. He stated that on June 2, approximately 750 students will graduate from high school in Lawrence, up from 586 in 2012. Mr. Riley highlighted the district’s Early College Pathways program, through which Merrimack College and Northern Essex Community College will provide courses to approximately 250 juniors and seniors. He noted that many student art festivals and concerts are taking place in May and June. Secretary Peyser asked if students may enter the Early College Pathways program earlier than junior year. Mr. Riley said students currently enter at the end of their sophomore year, and there will be future discussion of having them enter in the second semester of their sophomore year. Mr. Doherty asked if the increased number of high school graduates compared to 2012 is due to population growth. Mr. Riley said while the student population has grown, the graduation rate has increased even more and is now 72%. The members thanked Mr. Riley for his presentation.

Mr. Johnston introduced Holyoke Public Schools Receiver Dr. Stephen Zrike along with Ventura Rodriguez, Director of the Department’s Office of Strategic Transformation. Dr. Zrike presented demographic data on the student population in Holyoke and explained the vision for the district is a pathway for every student. He noted gains that have been made and said he is determined to accelerate the improvement based on values of encouraging bold thinking, exploring all possibilities for student success, embracing all students and families, empowering school teams to impact change, and engaging in meaningful feedback.

Dr. Zrike highlighted Holyoke’s high school redesign plan. As the plan is phased in with support from the Barr Foundation, Holyoke will establish a Freshman Academy in the ninth grade, and in grades ten through twelve, students will participate in theme-based academies that would include a career-technical education component as well as college preparation. Dr. Zrike described the early success of the dual enrollment program, which had six students enrolled in SY14-15; in SY 16-17, that number has risen to 119 students. Dr. Zrike said the district is working closely with Westfield State and UMass and is pleased with the early results thus far.

Dr. Zrike highlighted the increase in the length of the school day by 45-90 minutes daily in elementary and middle schools and noted these schools have a 67% participation rate in Breakfast in the Classroom. He said the dropout rate, 5.4%, is the lowest it has been in six years, which is a significant decline but still needs improvement. Dr. Zrike said the district is working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority on planning for two new middle schools. He noted positive increases in student and teacher engagement, parent participation in educational and outreach events, and student showcases. Looking ahead, Dr. Zrike said he is focused on providing more direct leadership support to principals, increasing the quality of teaching and the cognitive demand on students, building accountability, strengthening the middle level experience, and partnering to develop better training and coaching for staff and robust mental health and social-emotional support for students.

In response to questions, Dr. Zrike said Holyoke is part of the Preschool Opportunity grant and does not yet have space or resources to implement universal K1. He said with two new middle schools anticipated, the district will gradually reconfigure grade structures. Dr. Zrike said the dual language program has received positive feedback and will expand to a second site. He said the TIP/Peck program has improved significantly. Responding to a question from Vice-Chair Morton about how schools use the extended day, Dr. Zrike said they have increased academic time, Breakfast in the Classroom, enrichment blocks, and planning time for teachers.

Mr. Johnston introduced Dr. Jessica Huizenga, who is starting her second year as Southbridge Public Schools receiver. Dr. Huizenga outlined the vision for the Southbridge schools and reviewed the district’s demographics. She presented the five priorities of the district turnaround plan and discussed improvements to school climate and culture, including a new Department of Social and Emotional Learning, Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports, an advisory program for grades 6-12, and Breakfast in the Classroom. Dr. Huizenga noted that all schools now have WiFi and 1400 students and staff are working with new devices. Dr. Huizenga added that Southbridge has developed new curriculum units in grades 6-12 humanities and STEM and grades 1-5 math, and overall math results are improving.

Dr. Huizenga said the partnership with Scholastic has added 9,500 books to grades 2-5 and 500 books per middle school classroom. She reported on an English/Spanish dual language program that will start in kindergarten and grade 1 in Fall 2017. Dr. Huizenga discussed the secondary school redesign, which includes partnerships with Quinsigamond Community College, Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School, and Worcester State University, among others. She presented other priorities and activities including: developing effective teaching and leadership through professional development; applying evidence-informed decision making; cultivating family and community partnerships; and reallocating resources to ensure high quality management, accountability, system-wide coherence, and sustainability. Dr. Huizenga responded to questions about school climate and described reallocating funds from paraprofessional staffing to more-needed clinical services and alternative programs.

Vice-Chair Morton asked the receivers about their interaction with each other. Dr. Zrike said they confer with each other as well as with Department staff, and added that connecting their teams has been useful. Mr. Johnston said the meetings of the Urban Superintendents Network are helpful for the receivers and other district leaders to share common issues and best practices.

Ms. Noyce said she appreciated the energy and strategic thinking and she commended the receivers for tackling the challenge of secondary school redesign. She asked if the receivers believe the Department should have picked up on the difficulties of these districts sooner. Dr. Zrike said until you are there on a daily basis, you may not be able to pick up on all the systemic needs. He added that only now that he has been in this position for two years is he able to understand the depth of the issues. Dr. Zrike said the issues have been decades in the making and it will take time to turn around the district. Vice-Chair Morton thanked the receivers for their presentations and for their leadership and commitment.

Vice-Chair Morton acknowledged the audience members who were holding signs regarding Mystic Valley Regional Charter School. He invited them to submit letters to the Board and/or provide public comment at the Board’s regular meeting at Scituate High School on Tuesday, May 23, 2017.

The gathering of Board members concluded at 6:30 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell D. Chester

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

 and Secretary to the Board