

**Providence Career & Technical Academy  
41 Fricker Street  
Providence, RI 02903**

**REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES  
10/16/2024**

**1.0 Convene Meeting**

1.1 Call to Order at 6: 00 PM

**President Rogel called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM**

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

1.3 Roll Call

**Board Members in Attendance: Erlin Rogel, Travis Escobar, Melissa Hughes, Toni Akin, George Matouk, Ty’Relle Stephens, Night Jean Muhingabo, Michael Nina**

**Travis Escobar joined the meeting at 6:05 PM**

**Absent Board Members: Anjel Newman**

1.4 Superintendent’s Comments

**Dr. Javier Montañez –**

Good evening President Rogel, members of the school board, parents, and community members.

I would like to start by acknowledging that it is National Principals’ Month and I would like to take a moment to extend my gratitude to all of our school principals across the district. It is because of the hard work and leadership of our principals that our students and staff continue to move the needle.

Our principals, teachers and other support staff are also the biggest champions for the health and wellbeing of our students. Recently we observed World Mental Health Day. This is a focus districtwide because we know that when students are struggling with mental health issues, whether anxiety, depression or trauma, their capacity to attend school, learn and participate is significantly hindered. This is why I continually advocate for more guidance counselors, social workers, behavior interventionists and other SEL supports for our students.

For the first time ever, an elementary school in our district was recognized as a Blue Ribbon School. Congratulations to Dr. Martin Luther King Elementary School, Principal Kristen Lussier and staff on being recognized for closing the achievement gap. There are just over 300 schools nationwide that receive this designation.

Last week, the community joined us to cut a ribbon and tour the new Pleasant View Elementary School. A highlight of this visit was showing off some of the new flexible space, including an indoor play area and a state of the art media center.

It's the fourth like-new school to open in Providence in two years. The space is modern, bright and what our students deserve. Security and heating systems have also been upgraded.

I would like to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation for the Providence City Council and President Miller for their diligent efforts working through this year's budget process helping to secure an additional budget increase. Their commitment to the financial well-being of our community is truly commendable, and I recognize the hard work that went into this achievement.

President Miller has also put forth a resolution supporting the allocation of an additional 1 million dollars to PPSD and we can collectively thank the council and their support.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to respectfully communicate to all of our Providence Families of the importance of adhering to the legislative requirements set forth in the Crowley Act. This Act provides clear guidance to all municipalities regarding their obligations to meet the conditions for state aid. Ensuring that our budget and policies align with these directives is crucial in maintaining our eligibility and continuing to receive this essential support as we work through this year's fiscal obligation and future obligations to our students.

How much missing 23-24/How much missing 24-25? This will be highlighted in tonight's presentation.

As Superintendent of Providence Public Schools, I have been a vocal advocate for what my student's needs and have repeatedly requested that the City meet their legal obligation to fund our schools under the Crowley Act.

Last week, Mayor Smiley sent a letter to us, and then hosted a press conference in reaction to me reaching out to him about the critical finance issues our District faces asking him to bridge the disconnect with Crowley Legislation and the City's obligation.

When the Mayor passes a budget each year that breaks promises that the City made to the students and is not in compliance with state law, that's wrong.

Each year, the Rhode Island State Department of Revenue has notified the Mayor and his team that their budget is not in compliance with DOR Regulations or state law, but the mayor signed this budget anyways. That is reckless budgeting. It certainly isn't investing in our students.

It is also important to note that PPSD is already part of the City's annual audit by a third-party firm, Clifton, Larson & Allen. This firm is selected by the

City to conduct the audit for both the City and PPSD. We understand the importance of checks and balances.

We want to work with the Mayor and the City on these critical investments needed for Providence children so that we can continue to attract companies and their employees to our New Blue Ribbon Elementary School, 5 Star pre-k rooms, PCTA where we have grown programs and Newly Designed Pathways at our 4 Redesign Schools like our new Biomedical Program.

Recently, the Commissioner's Office shared with School Board Members a comprehensive plan of action outlining the next steps in the process of creating a new Turnaround Action Plan for the District. This plan sets the framework for our approach and ensures we are taking deliberate and meaningful actions in preparation for local control. I have made a copy for each of you to read as it outlines critical components for the transition back to local control.

Specific to the K-12 Council is the City of Providence having a plan to support the Crowley Legislation and I, the students, the parents and constituents can help us to make sure we can afford the guidance teams, social workers and social emotional support teams for our Kiddos.

We also understand now critical community input is during this transition plan. That's why we are kicking off a series of stakeholder engagement opportunities to hear from all voices, parents, students, teachers and community leaders on the future of our district.

These engagements are designed to gather feedback on what is working well and where we can improve as we move toward local control.

In addition to in-person meetings, we sent out a survey last Wednesday to all parents to gather broader feedback. I am pleased to report that we currently have almost 200 survey responses so far in less than a week. This level of engagement demonstrates the community's investment in the future of our schools, and we're eager to review the feedback.

The insights from these surveys and community meetings will be integral as we revise the TAP and work towards improving the overall experience for our students and families.

Finally, I wanted to give an update on the network issues and the unauthorized access. PPSD takes information security very seriously. We have been working with outside cybersecurity experts and have implemented specific steps to safeguard against potential unauthorized access. We are also evaluating additional measures to further enhance our protocols for the protection of your personal information and accounts.

While we continue to work closely with our partners and law enforcement, we wanted to alert our school community as we learned about this. We will continue to work to fully understand the potential exposure and should it be needed, provide additional guidance and resources to students,

families, and staff if they are impacted. The safety of our school community and the security of personal information is a top priority here at PPSD, and we will communicate any additional information on this matter as it becomes available. We are updating the Board tonight in Executive Session and hope to have a full presentation to the Board in future meetings.

Let's continue working together to make Providence a destination for education. Thank you.

**This meeting was live streamed on YouTube – Regular School Board Meeting  
10-16-2024**

**2.0 Approve Agenda**

2.1 Approval of Agenda

**At this time a Motion was made to Approve the Agenda as presented  
MSV – Escobar, Stephens (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

**3.0 Consent Agenda**

3.1 Approval of Minutes – 9-18-2024

**A Motion was made to Approve the Minutes as presented  
MSV – Escobar, Akin (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

3.2 Review of Homeschool Candidates

**A Motion was made to Approve the Home School Candidates  
MSV – Stephens, Nina (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

**4.0 Presentations**

4.1 Providence Public Schools Budget Update – Zachary Scott

**5.0 Public Comment**

5.1 Public Comment – Right to be Heard

**There were 31 public speakers who expressed their concerns regarding the  
PPSD Budget Update**

**6.0 School Board Comments**

6.1 School Board Comments

**7.0 School Board Committee Updates**

7.1 Policy Committee – Melissa Hughes

7.2 Finance Committee – Toni Akin

7.3 Health & Wellness – Night Jean Muhingabo

7.4 CTE Committee – Travis Escobar

7.5 Schools Building Committee – George Matouk

## **8.0 Report on Contracts**

### 8.1 Renaissance Learning

**A Motion was made to Approve this contract  
MSV – Escobar, Akin (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

**9:32 PM** - A Motion was made to enter into Executive Session Pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 42-46-4, 42-46-5(a)(1) Teacher Termination & Suspension, 42-46-4 and 42-46-5(a)(1) Teacher Suspension, and Executive Session Pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 42-46-5(3) Discussion Related to school security

**MSV – Akin, Escobar (8-0) MOTON APPROVED**

**Roll Call Vote: Nina Aye, Akin Aye, Escobar Aye, Rogel Aye, Hughes Aye,  
Stephens Aye, Muhingabo Aye, Matouk Aye**

## **9.0 Executive Session**

9.1 Executive Session Pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 42-46-4 and 42-46-5(a)(1) Teacher Termination & Suspension.

9.2 Executive Session Pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 42-46-4 and 42-46-5(a)(1) Teacher Suspension.

9.2 Executive Session Pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws 42-46-5(3) Discussion Regarding the matter of security.

## **10.0 Report on Executive Session Votes**

### 10.1 Report on Executive Session Votes

There was one (2) vote taken during Executive Session

A Motion was made to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to suspend Teacher A without pay pending the conclusion of a criminal investigation.

**MSV – Escobar, Stephens (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

A Motion was made to exit the Executive Session.

**MSV - Stephens, Escobar (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

**(After Executive Session)**

A Motion was made to seal the minutes of the Executive Session.

**MSV – Stephens, Muhingabo (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

A Motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

**MSV – Escobar, Muhinbago (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**

**11.0 Adjourn**

11.1 Adjourn Meeting – 10:55 PM

**A Motion was made to adjourn the meeting**

**MSV – Escobar, Muhingabo (8-0) MOTION APPROVED**