

Rhode Island School Building Taskforce

Monday November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 4:00 pm  
1 Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908

# Minutes

## **I. Introductions**

Taskforce members present: Treasurer Seth Magaziner (co-chair), Commissioner Ken Wagner (co-chair), Director Michael DiBiase, Frank Flynn, Joseph Dewhirst, Dave Cournoyer, Larry Purtill, Michael Sabitoni, Neil Steinberg, Sen. Hanna Gallo, Andy Nota, Jo Eva Gaines, Stephanie Geller, Barry Ricci.

Taskforce members absent: Kinzel Thomas, John Hazen White, Jr., Representative Marvin Abney, Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Jhonny Levya, Dr. Patricia Flanagan.

Other attendees included: Dr. Joe DaSilva, School Construction Coordinator, RIDE

Treasurer Magaziner called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

## **II. Co-Chairs' Remarks**

Treasurer Magaziner and Commissioner Wagner welcomed Taskforce members. The Treasurer summarized past meetings before explaining the purpose of this week's meeting will be to brainstorm various incentives and cost controls that will then be drafted into preliminary recommendations for the next meeting.

Treasurer Magaziner told the group he had recently visited the Potter Burns school in Pawtucket, which had been renovated over the past few years after the ceiling had collapsed. He was impressed with the renovated the facility and said all children should have the opportunity to go to school in such a building. The principal of the school had anecdotally shared the improvement of student performance, with a decline in both absenteeism and discipline issues, showing that space is important in learning outcomes.

Treasurer Magaziner presented a recommended meeting schedule as the Taskforce looks provide its recommendations by December 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **III. Approval of the October 30th, 2017 Taskforce Meeting Minutes**

On a motion by Mr. Sabitoni and seconded by Ms. Gallo, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to approve the October 30th, 2017 Taskforce Meeting Minutes.

#### **IV. Share Reimbursement Incentive Discussion**

Commissioner Wagner talked through the proposed incentive structure. He discussed the principles and benefits of an incentive system, particularly for state share reimbursement incentives. Such incentives must be simple and attractive enough to motivate districts to request more project approvals. They should encourage projects that are simple, fast and have a predictable impact. Incentives must also expire. He went on the outline possible incentives.

After the presentation, members were solicited for their ideas on an equitable incentive structure, and opinions on the proposed incentives.

Mr. Steinberg noted that incentives will not always work and there should be more stringent maintenance requirements. Mr. Sabitoni agreed that some maintenance can be done that is inexpensive and communities should be prioritizing their needs. Commissioner Wagner added that there is only so much that can be achieved through an incentive structure as there are fundamental governance issues that produce deferred maintenance issues.

Mr. Dewhirst asked if there was an institutional solution to encourage the commission of projects that will break even or are cash positive for communities. The Treasurer stated that if a PAYGO system were adopted communities would not incur as much debt thus encouraging more of those projects to be taken on.

Director DiBiase wondered if warm, safe, dry, energy improvements and reducing overcrowding points should be incentivized as he felt these areas are essentially incentivized through the initiative itself. Mr. Steinberg countered that he believed the warm, safe, dry provision should have more urgency.

Mr. Nota offered that there should be more emphasis on newer and fewer facilities as to avoid throwing good money after bad and bandaging out-of-date facilities.

Treasurer Magaziner encouraged members to provide additional notes, opinions and ideas to himself and Commissioner Wagner before the next meeting so they may be incorporated in the draft recommendation document that will be presented at that time.

#### **V. Massachusetts and Rhode Island Comparison & Discussion on Cost Control**

Dr. DaSilva presented a summary of differences between the Massachusetts and Rhode Island programs, discussing 8 distinct areas, and highlighting an opportunity in each area for improvement to provide members with possible options to incorporate into its recommendations. Special attention was given to the controls Massachusetts puts in place to control project costs,

including the use of Owners Project Managers, and a more direct state role in selecting project designers and commissioning agents.

The members asked questions and offered specific feedback on each area's proposed solutions.

## **VI. Adjournment**

Treasurer Magaziner thanked the members for their time and reminded them to forward their proposed incentives and ideas on cost control as there will be a thorough discussion on both at the next meeting.

There being no other business to come before the body, the meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.