

Rhode Island School Building Taskforce

Thursday, December 7th, 2017 4:30 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, Sen. Hanna Gallo, Andy Nota, Jo Eva Gaines, Dr. Patricia Flanagan, Barry Ricci, Jhonny Levya, Elizabeth Burke Bryant.

Taskforce members absent: Kinzel Thomas, John Hazen White, Jr., Representative Marvin Abney, Larry Purtill, Michael Sabitoni, Neil Steinberg.

Other attendees included: Cynthia Brown, Director, Office of Statewide Efficiencies, RIDE

Treasurer Magaziner called the meeting to order at 4:35 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 would be to review items of the draft recommendations. He noted that this should be the second to last meeting before the December 15th due date of the Taskforce's recommendations, and that the last meeting on December 13th would be held at a school facility.

The Treasurer highlighted the main points of previous Task Force conversation at the and presented a draft document to the group that summarized the draft plan. He noted that the process for this meeting would be to review the document section by section.

III. Approval of the November 14th, 2017 Taskforce Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Burke Bryant and seconded by Ms. Gaines, it was unanimously **VOTED:** to approve the November 14th, 2017 Taskforce Meeting Minutes.

IV. Proposed Recommendation Draft Discussion

The Treasurer lead the Taskforce through the three goals they have for Rhode Island Schools over the next decade: schools that are to be warm, safe and dry, all schools are to have 21st century learning environments and that each school district see meaningful improvements to the condition of its public school buildings. Ms. Gaines commented that the goal of having 21st century learning environments should include the term “technology enabled” education and encouraged that language be added.

The next item discussed was the proposed increase in state funding for school building projects. The Treasurer explained that the state’s funding needs to be substantial. He added there needs to be incentives and bonus expirations to incentivize communities to come forward with projects. He also discussed proposed bonus structures and outlined details of the point system.

With respect to those districts with a high state reimbursement rate, Mr. Dewhirst noted that the local share might still be too prohibitive on debt capacity. Mr. Dewhirst then asked the board to reconsider the state share ratio for these distressed communities. Ms. Gallo countered that she believed it was very important for even financially distressed municipalities to maintain at least some share of the responsibility.

Mr. Ricci stated that accepting a project should be contingent on having a 5-year capital plan. He also added that a bonus for consolidation should be available. After some discussion, the group agreed that there should be a structured bonus to benefit municipalities who efficiently consolidate to encourage savings.

The group then talked about funding, and specifically that state general obligation bonding will fund more projects and shift the state share to PAYGO. Treasurer Magaziner detailed the proposed allocation and prioritization of the use of bond proceeds.

Regarding cost control ideas, Ms. Brown from RIDE provided color on a new potential provision of establishing a state procedure for general contractor certification and pre-qualification for projects greater than \$10 million. She discussed the process in Massachusetts to illustrate how it could be beneficial to Rhode Island. The Taskforce agreed this recommendation would be helpful.

Treasurer Magaziner led the group through the remaining recommendations concluding that the implementation of these proposed activities will invariably lead to some increased state staffing. Although there is not a specific recommendation on the additional FTEs to be added, the Taskforce agreed to recommend additional staffing as to be determined by departmental budget officers.

After summarizing the suggestions made by the task force members at the meeting, Treasurer Magaziner stated a final draft would be brought to the next and final meeting, incorporating the group’s ideas.

VI. Adjournment

Treasurer Magaziner thanked the members for their time and continued engagement. He encouraged members to reach out with additional ideas, questions or concerns ahead of the next meeting.

There being no other business to come before the body, the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.