

Minority Education Concerns Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 19, 2009

MINUTES

Members Present

Dr. Ellsworth James  
Jonathan Larson  
Polly Miller  
James Beverly  
Dan Loring  
Atisa Logo  
Lamin Jobarteh  
Damito Owen (via tele-conference)

Members Absent

Lori Pickett  
James LaBelle  
Fa'aana Tosi

Others Present

Jeff Friedman, School Board President  
Carol Comeau, Superintendent  
Ed Graff, Executive Director, Elementary Education  
Tammy Smith, Technician, West High  
Mike Boots, Member, Anchorage High School Auditorium Restoration Committee  
Captain Jimmy McClain, NAACP Education Chair  
Margo Bellamy, Director, EEO  
Mr. James opened meeting for public comments at 4:30 PM.

**Public Comments:**

1. **Carol Comeau:** Mrs. Comeau spoke to the committee regarding its plans to host a Public Forum for school board candidates. Mrs. Comeau stated that the proposed date (March 28<sup>th</sup>) will make it very difficult for ASD staff and board members (3 of which are running for re-election) to attend the forum. Mrs. Comeau also stated that given the late notice of the forum, many school board candidates may not be able to attend and the boardroom may not be available. Mrs. Comeau also stated that while she thinks the Forum is a valuable resource, more time and more inter-community coordination is recommended. Mrs. Comeau also recommended that the MECAC co-host, not host, such an event. Mrs. Comeau encouraged MECAC to plan a future forum and hold a number of forums in several areas of the community.
2. **Jeff Friedman:** Mr. Friedman spoke to the committee regarding its plans to host the Public Forum. Mr. Friedman stated that he supports the committee's efforts to provide information to the community. Mr. Friedman stated that it feels a bit awkward to him to have MECAC be the sole sponsor of a school board candidate forum. Mr. Friedman stated that sole sponsorship could

raise conflict of interest issues and put current board members who are running for re-election in an uncomfortable position. Mr. Friedman stated that in the future he would like to see a series of forums held in diverse neighborhoods throughout the community. Mr. Friedman recommended that MECAC get confirmation from the school board to move forward with planning a future forum.

Committee Member's Response to Comeau & Friedman:

- Mr. Loring commended the Outreach Subcommittee for their work to plan the forum. Mr. Loring stated that he sees the forum as being very fruitful for MECAC and the community and that if the forum does not happen this year, it should take place in future years. Mr. Loring recommended that the forum be deferred until next year.
  - Mr. Larson thanked the superintendent for attending and commented that the Outreach Subcommittee sees the forum as a valuable service to the community. Mr. Larson agreed that MECAC should not be the official sponsor of the forum. Mr. Larson stated that the committee's current outreach plans are just the beginning of MECAC's efforts to educate and inform the community.
3. **Tammy Smith**, West High School Technician: Ms. Smith spoke to the committee regarding the next phase of renovation for the West High School Auditorium which is to replace the stage rigging system. Ms. Smith asked for the committee's support with fundraising for the rigging system and with community outreach to diverse families.
4. **Mr. Mike Boots**, Member, Anchorage High School Auditorium Restoration Committee: Mr. Boots spoke to the committee regarding West High's need for a new rigging system. Mr. Boots stated that the current system is unsafe and must be replaced. Mr. Boots stated that he would like to see more minority parents and community members involved in the renovation and fundraising efforts for the West High Auditorium (Donor Wall and Pledge-a-seat). Mr. Boots stated that they have raised \$205,000 for the rigging system but this is not enough to cover the cost for a new rigging system. Mr. Boots stated that a memorandum will go before the school board on Monday (3/23) asking the school board to provide the additional funding that will be needed to replace the rigging system.

Committee Member's Response to Smith & Boots:

- Mr. Larson stated that he would like for MECAC to support the West High Auditorium fundraising efforts. Mr. Larson also stated that he will propose, under new business, that the MECAC submit a

resolution to the school board in support of the school board providing the additional funding for the rigging system.

5. **Captain Jimmy McClain**, NAACP Education Chair: Captain McClain spoke to MECAC on behalf of the NAACP. Captain McClain stated that the NAACP education goes do not just apply to African American students but all students. Captain McClain stated that he sees MECAC as a valuable vehicle to help carry out the NAACP Education goals:
  - Implement a Back-To-School, Stay-in-School Program
  - Free Pre-K
  - Feeding Children

Captain McClain stated that he was disappointed w the governor's decision to not take the stimulus money for education. Captain McClain stated that the impact of not taking the money will be to Title 1 schools and IDEA.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Loring noted that the agenda was not approved until 5:45 PM and made the following recommendations:

- a. That the Public Comment section of the agenda be moved to the top of the agenda for future meetings and suggested that the chair more closely watch the amount of time used by speakers and presentations. Mr. Loring noted that the agenda was not approved until 5:43 PM which did not leave much time for the committee's work.
- b. That the Chair sends a draft of any MECAC document (i.e. the new MECAC letterhead) to members before actually using the document. Mr. Loring noted an error in the new letterhead.
  - a. Add the economic stimulus funding and the West High rigging system under New Business.
  - b. Add the MECAC website under Old Business.
  - c. Add the Discipline Subcommittee under New Business.

Moved by Mr. Loring and seconded Mr. Beverly that the agenda be approved as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Moved by Mr. Larson and seconded by Mr. Loring that the minutes be approved as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Announcements**

1. Mr. Friedman informed the committee that the governor announced that she is rejecting the economic stimulus funding for education. Mr. Friedman stated that the impact will be significant to the ASD specifically for students in Title 1 schools and students who qualify under IDEA. Mr. Friedman encouraged the committee to contact their legislators by letters, phone calls emails and consider providing public testimony before the Anchorage Caucus which will meet at Lousaac Public Library on Saturday, 3/21 @ 10 AM.

## **Sub-Committee Reports**

- Special Education Concerns committee- Mr. Loring reported that the committee has not had a formal meeting but continues its work via phone and email. The administration provided an ethnic breakdown of active Special Ed students. This was distributed to the committee.
- MECAC Outreach Subcommittee- Mr. Larson stated that the subcommittee met and planned a Public Forum for School Board Candidates. Mr. Larson distributed copies of the committee's report to the group. Mr. Loring stated that he would like to see more MECAC subcommittee coordination with ASD departments.

## **Old Business**

1. School Feedback
  - a. Mr. Loring advised the committee that a public meeting to discuss the planning and design of the new West High is being held at West High School tonight @ 6:30.
2. Community & school relationships
  - a. Mr. Larson advised the committee that he has been asked to present on 'intercultural education' at Passages on Saturday, 3/21.
  - b. Dr. James shared his involvement in a successful family/school intervention with an ASD student who was recommended for expulsion. Dr. James explained that the intervention was possible because of the cooperation and willingness of the district to work with this family.

3. MECAC Orientation Manual
  - a. Mr. Loring recommended that the manual draft be presented at the April MECAC meeting.
4. MECAC Website
  - a. Mr. Loring reported that the MECAC website is being updated so that it is more useful and friendly.
  - b. Mr. Beverly asked the committee to review the website and send idea to him or to Mr. Loring.
  - c. Mr. Larson noted that when you click on Dr. James' name on the website you are taken to a business link.
  - d. Mr. Loring stated that there should be no personal or business advertising on the MECAC website.

### **New Business**

1. Moved by Mr. Larson and seconded by Mr. Loring, that the Outreach Subcommittee's plans for the Public Forum be suspended until next year and that the Public Forum become an annual MECAC event which is co-hosted with some other local organization. The motion passed unanimously
2. Moved by Mr. Larson and seconded by Mr. Loring that MECAC submit a resolution to the school board in support of providing the additional funding needed to replace the West High School rigging system. Motion passed unanimously. The resolution will be presented at the March 23<sup>rd</sup> school board meeting.
3. Mr. Larson stated the he would like to see the members of MECAC pool their individual donations to pledge-a-seat in the renovated West High Auditorium. The cost will be \$500 per seat and MECAC would be engraved on the seat. It was decided that members who wanted to contribute to pledge-a-seat could do so without violating any ethical requirement.
4. Moved by Mr. Larson and seconded by Mr. Beverly, the MECAC submit a resolution to the school board supporting the Superintendents position on the economic stimulus funding for education. Motion passed unanimously. The resolution would be presented at the March 23<sup>rd</sup> school board meeting.
5. Moved by Mr. Loring and seconded by Ms. Miller that James Beverly Chair the discipline Committee. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Beverly accepted the chair position. Mr. Loring asked if Mr. Beverly would be willing to add customer service as part of the discipline committee. After discussion among several members of the committee, Mr. Beverly stated that he views

discipline separate from customer service and would not like to join the two into one subcommittee.

6. Moved by Mr. Larson and seconded by Mr. Loring that Dr. James collaborates with the administration to provide MECAC with a team building staff development opportunity. Motion unanimously carried.
7. The committee unanimously agreed to recognize the leadership and support of Rhonda Gardner at the April Meeting. Damita Owen agreed to take care of coordinating the committee's recognition.
8. The committee unanimously agreed to submit a resolution to the school board supporting a new (revised) systemic student discipline plan that keeps students in school. The resolution will be submitted at a future date. The resolution will ask the school board to address the following issues discipline, fairness, equity, privacy, social justice, accountability and customer service.