



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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AMSD Legislative Committee Meeting

Friday, February 26, 2021, 7:30 am – 9:00 am
Conducted via Zoom

Members Present: Lisa Anderson Renee Corneille Andrea Cuene
Kelsey Dawson Walton Pat Driscoll
Zuki Ellis Kim Hiel Curtis Johnson
David Law Astein Osei Christine Osorio
Mike Redmond John Stroebel

Staff Present: Scott Croonquist Troy Melhus Kimberly Jansa

Guests Present: Mary Dougherty Josh Downham Lori Grivna

I. Approval of Minutes of January 29 Meeting

Chair Curtis Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:36 a.m. Johnson asked members to review the minutes from the January 29 meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved.

II. Executive Director's Report

Chair Johnson asked Executive Director Scott Croonquist to share his report. Croonquist reported that the pace has picked up considerably at the Capitol with committees hearing and processing bills. He noted that many AMSD superintendents and school board members have provided valuable testimony. Croonquist reported that the Governor has three proposals related to education: a policy bill, a budget bill, and a Summer Education Package. The Governor is asking the legislature to approve the summer package, which also addresses declining enrollment due to COVID-19, by April 15.

Croonquist noted that the February Budget and Economic forecast will be released this afternoon. The Governor will then make any necessary adjustments to his proposal and the House and Senate will begin developing their respective budgets. The House is expected to release their budget targets on or around March 22. Unlike the House, the Senate does not have a formal process and timeline to release their budget targets. Croonquist reminded members that first policy committee deadline is March 12, and the second is March 19. The budget bill deadline is April 9. Croonquist anticipates that the House and Senate education budget bills will be decidedly different.

Croonquist shared that President Biden's administration has announced that they will not waive the requirement for states to conduct accountability exams – the MCAs in Minnesota. Instead, states will be offered the ability to request other waivers including shortening the test, offering the test remotely and not requiring 95% participation.

Croonquist reported that AMSD joined several organizations – MASA, MSBA, MASBO and MREA – to support a statewide budget survey. The survey was conducted by MASBO, and approximately half of the districts in the state have responded. Of the 150 districts that have responded, 92% have reported they will be looking at a budget shortfall. Just 22% of responding districts indicated they will go out for a referendum next fall.

Croonquist reported on the Innovation Reform Bill, which would allow districts to continue to offer distance learning options without becoming an official online provider. This will allow for more flexibility and AMSD is asking that legislators include this with the summer package for early consideration. Croonquist asked committee members for feedback on the School Bus Stop Arm Camera legislation. This legislation does not create a new mandate; instead, a portion of the fine collected for violations will be given to the district in which it occurs. The committee agreed that this is good for kids and their safety.

Croonquist reported that the proposed Constitutional Amendment is not currently generating much discussion at the Capitol, mainly because it is a budget year. The proposed amendment has been introduced with the same language from last year and is now referred to as the Page Amendment. There was a lively conversation about the amendment and how proactive AMSD should be in the process. There was a consensus that AMSD should continue to engage in the discussion and seek changes to address identified concerns with the proposed language.

Croonquist asked the committee how to best proceed with AMSD meetings in the coming months. Because of vaccine and other health concerns, the committee members decided to continue with Zoom meetings for the foreseeable future. The goal would be to start the new year in person, with a Zoom option available.

III. Preliminary Discussion of 2021 Session Priorities

Executive Director Croonquist asked members to review the draft Session Priorities document. Croonquist reminded committee members that AMSD's past practice has been to develop a revised and streamlined version of the legislative platform a few months into the session. Croonquist asked committee members for their feedback on the draft. Committee members suggested a couple of changes: advocating for a streamlined process to license short-term substitutes and amending the language from "approve an education package by April 1" to "approve an education package as soon as possible and no later than April 1". A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2021 Session Priorities with these two revisions. The 2021 Session Priorities were approved as amended. The priorities document will be brought to the March Board of Directors meeting for final approval.

IV. Adjourn

With no further business before the committee, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 9:01 a.m.