

**In The Matter Of:**  
*Wilmington Education Improvement Commission  
Transition, Resource and Implementation Plan*

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*Public Hearing  
December 2, 2015*

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IN THE MATTER OF:

WILMINGTON EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION  
Redistricting In the City of Wilmington and  
New Castle County: A Transition, Resource,  
and Implementation Plan

Bayard Middle School  
200 S. Dupont Street  
Wilmington, Delaware

Wednesday, December 2, 2015  
6:30 p.m.

BEFORE: JOE PIKA & HENRY HARPER,  
Redistricting Committee

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1 MR. PIKA: Good evening. It  
2 works. How nice. I'm Joe Pika. And for  
3 those of you who have not been in a public  
4 hearing before, I'm the public hearing officer  
5 for tonight. These public hearings are an  
6 extension of the process of soliciting public  
7 input.

8 In advance of these public  
9 hearings, the Wilmington Education Improvement  
10 Commission has already held nine town hall  
11 meetings including at least one in each of the  
12 four school districts serving Wilmington and  
13 at the schools in the city of Wilmington as  
14 well as in New Castle County.

15 All of the Wilmington Education  
16 Improvement Commission meetings including  
17 meetings of each of the five committees have  
18 been open to the public and posted on the  
19 commission and district websites.

20 To get the word out about the  
21 public meeting including the hearings,  
22 postings have been made to the  
23 solutionsfordelawareschools.com website, the  
24 Solutions for Wilmington Schools Facebook



1 page, the district websites, and with  
2 community organizations such as the YMCA.

3 The information was also shared  
4 by the members of the commission and its  
5 committees with their networks.

6 Just a few procedural items for  
7 the record. I'll be reading from a script,  
8 and later in the script I'll explain about the  
9 process for making comments tonight.

10 Now to the script. Good evening.  
11 I declare this public hearing to be open. My  
12 name is Joe Pika. I'm here with Henry Harper,  
13 co-chair of the redistricting committee of the  
14 Wilmington Education Improvement Commission.  
15 I've been appointed by the chair of the WEIC  
16 to conduct this public hearing.

17 The Wilmington Education  
18 Improvement Commission interim redistricting  
19 report was released on November 17th, and we  
20 are here tonight to gather public comment.  
21 This is not a question-and-answer session.

22 This hearing provides the  
23 commission and the state board of education  
24 with an opportunity to receive public comment



1 on the commission's interim report that was  
2 released on November 17th.

3 We also have with us this evening  
4 a court reporter sitting here at the front so  
5 that there is an accurate record of this  
6 hearing. It will be necessary for each  
7 speaker to clearly identify him or herself by  
8 name and affiliation before beginning to speak  
9 so that the court reporter will be able to  
10 note who you are in the transcript.

11 The record of this hearing and  
12 the other four hearings -- actually, now we've  
13 expanded that, so it will be the other five  
14 hearings, there will be a total of six -- will  
15 be provided to the members of the Wilmington  
16 Education Improvement Commission and the  
17 members of the state board of education  
18 together with all written and electronic  
19 comments received at this hearing or outside  
20 of this hearing between November the 17th and  
21 January the 14th.

22 This meeting is being recorded,  
23 and that recording will also be posted and  
24 shared with the state board of education for



1 their review.

2 We will proceed in the following  
3 manner: We'll take comments from anyone who  
4 desires to speak. There are sign-up sheets at  
5 the back of the room, and hopefully you've had  
6 your opportunity to sign in, sign on those  
7 sheets. Those wishing to offer testimony  
8 during the hour and a half provided for the  
9 public hearing must sign up.

10 Sign-up began at 6:00 p.m. and  
11 will end, in theory, at least, at 7:30 p.m.,  
12 at which time I will collect the remaining  
13 sign-up sheets. We will have individuals  
14 speak in the order in which they signed up.  
15 I'll begin with the first sign-up sheet now.

16 Each individual will have three  
17 minutes to speak. Each group will be allowed  
18 five minutes to speak. Those giving testimony  
19 will be given a 30-second warning -- there's  
20 our warning system -- and will be told to stop  
21 after their time is up.

22 For those who have come this  
23 evening with questions, again, I'm sorry, but  
24 procedural guidelines do not allow questions



1 to be answered during this public hearing.

2 Okay. Our first speaker this  
3 evening is Raina Harper Allen.

4 MS. ALLEN: Good evening.

5 MR. PIKA: Identify yourself  
6 again.

7 MS. ALLEN: My name is Raina,  
8 R-a-i-n-a, Allen. I am the interim executive  
9 of Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League.  
10 Thank you for this opportunity to present our  
11 written comments. I will read them, and then  
12 I will turn in the copy to the commission.

13 Commission members and members of  
14 the Delaware State Board of Education, today  
15 the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League  
16 offers a strong endorsement of the school  
17 governance plan for the City of Wilmington.  
18 This plan is no silver bullet.

19 However, after 60 years of  
20 silence from lawmakers at every level of state  
21 and municipal government and a reform effort's  
22 most significant hallmark being that of  
23 federal court intervention, it is the view of  
24 the Urban League, a multiracial coalition of



1 thousands of Delawareans over its 16-year  
2 history, that simply doing nothing and  
3 returning to business as usual is no longer  
4 tolerable.

5 Our most compelling evidence for  
6 change is twofold. The first is an analysis  
7 of the performance of all students in New  
8 Castle County disaggregated by those who are  
9 low income, those who are City of Wilmington  
10 residents, and those who are both low income  
11 and Wilmington residents.

12 In each case, performance  
13 declines based on income and geography across  
14 all districts and in most of the attenuating  
15 charter schools. Please see this report, 2014  
16 Colonial City of Wilmington Low-Income schools  
17 and Statewide Low-Income Students.

18 To be clear, that means, quite  
19 literally, none of the more than 18 governing  
20 units suggesting that they are delivering  
21 quality education to 11,500 city students are  
22 even remotely close to closing the achievement  
23 gap.

24 Moreover, those who are making



1 progress have not found a way to routinely  
2 sustain such success or to scale it up in  
3 other learning environments.

4 We believe that doing nothing  
5 would assure that the cost of education in  
6 Delaware will continue to rise and rise to a  
7 level we believe is unsustainable.

8 Low-income students across the  
9 state will continue to underperform their  
10 middle-class counterparts, rates of  
11 incarceration and recidivism will reach  
12 unprecedented levels, and Delaware and its  
13 central city will be increasingly less  
14 attractive to employers large and small.

15 This is not supposition.  
16 Further, it is substantiated by the recently  
17 released report from the Centers for Disease  
18 Control and Prevention, which was commissioned  
19 by Wilmington City Counselwoman Hanifa  
20 Shabazz, Elevated Rates of Urban Firearm  
21 Violence and Opportunities for Prevention,  
22 this report. We would like to submit the full  
23 CDC report for the record as well.

24 The second most compelling



1 evidence for change is that the state finds  
2 itself, perhaps intentionally, lagging on any  
3 number of the most regarded best practices for  
4 student success.

5 Most notably, Delaware is one of  
6 only 15 states in the country that does not  
7 have a funding allocation for schools with  
8 high concentrations of low-income students,  
9 even though 50 percent of its public school  
10 children are low income.

11 It is one of only five states  
12 that do not offer funding allocations to  
13 schools with high concentrations of English  
14 Language Learners, even though that segment of  
15 the student population is its fastest growing.

16 This means that for more than 50  
17 years the state funding formula has assumed no  
18 changes in its student profile, demographics,  
19 or family income.

20 In 2002 the Urban League issued  
21 Delaware's first ever comprehensive report on  
22 the status of people of color in Delaware. In  
23 the foreword, Pulitzer Prize-winning  
24 journalist Norman Lockman wrote, "An



1 examination of the numbers reflecting the  
2 achievement gap that exists between children  
3 of color and their white peers shows more than  
4 differences in 'intelligence indicators;' it  
5 also shows that the results of school systems,  
6 both secondary and higher, that denied  
7 minorities access to academic opportunities  
8 for so long that it created generations of  
9 individuals who dismissed education as  
10 meaningless because there was so little  
11 pay-off for them."

12                   Despite the rapidly changing  
13 diversity of our community, state and country,  
14 Delaware has not kept up with the times. We  
15 would like to submit The Pace of Progress for  
16 the public record as well. Thank you.

17                   MR. PIKA: So we have several  
18 documents to enter into the record as  
19 exhibits.

20                   Our next speaker is Karen  
21 Rayfield.

22                   MS. RAYFIELD: Good evening. I'm  
23 Karen Rayfield. I'm a teacher here, a  
24 seventh-grade math teacher here at Bayard



1 Middle School. I don't have anything prepared  
2 as she has, but I just wanted to speak from my  
3 heart and to represent my school.

4           There's been a lot of talk about  
5 change. And from someone who works in the  
6 trenches with the kids every day, I would hope  
7 that this change is real, that it's not just  
8 talk.

9           Our kids need services beyond my  
10 control, health services, services with their  
11 family, programs that need to be instituted  
12 that just will help them get them through  
13 their day.

14           I appreciate that you guys had  
15 this here at the school, but I don't know if  
16 the message got out to everyone because our  
17 students don't have access to the internet,  
18 and what I heard was mostly internet and Y  
19 pamphlets being sent out.

20           Also, if there's any student  
21 participation as far as a student's input, a  
22 child's input that lives in the city, that  
23 probably would be greatly advantageous for  
24 this group to move forward because I don't



1 think everybody really knows what goes on.  
2 You might think you know, but you don't know.  
3 Test scores, numbers on papers don't show  
4 anything.

5 Here we wipe tears. We hug  
6 children. We feed children. We call parents.  
7 We give assistance. We're mothers. We're  
8 fathers. We're police officers. We're  
9 educators. And we do much more than teach.

10 So I just wanted to go on the  
11 record to say again that I hope that this  
12 change is real and not imaginary and something  
13 that I can tell my students, whether I'll be  
14 here at this school because of the  
15 redistricting or not, that they can really  
16 believe that someone believes in them enough  
17 to make the change happen. That's it.

18 MR. PIKA: Thank you very much.

19 Our next speaker is -- and you  
20 have to forgive me. I'm having trouble  
21 reading if first name. Keller?

22 MR. KELLEY: Kevin Kelley.

23 MR. PIKA: Kevin Kelley. Excuse  
24 me.



1 MR. KELLEY: I need to learn to  
2 write a little bit better, I guess.

3 Good evening. My name is Kevin  
4 Kelley.

5 How are you doing, Harry?

6 It's a pleasure to be here this  
7 evening. I'm a former city councilperson that  
8 represented this district for 20 years and  
9 live in the Christina School District. I was  
10 a member of the neighborhood schools committee  
11 some time ago when really a lot of this  
12 discussion that we're here tonight started  
13 with.

14 I will say that I'm here in  
15 support of the plan. There are some issues,  
16 as the devils are in the details, with how  
17 we're going to proceed. But the reality of it  
18 is that the children that are in the City of  
19 Wilmington, the education system is failing  
20 them and has been failing them for some time.

21 Our students in this district in  
22 Christina are forced to ride the bus to G High  
23 Newark, and Christina, which are the farthest  
24 rides of any children in the state of



1 Delaware. We're not learning. The young lady  
2 here, the math teacher who was just here,  
3 she's doing her best to be able to take care  
4 of what we have here in the schools.

5 But if you look at some  
6 statistics of what goes on, a teacher's salary  
7 at Stubbs School is 47,000. That's the lowest  
8 in Christina School District, and that's one  
9 of the performing schools, the three that we  
10 have. The highest is \$70,000 at Downes.  
11 That's a 50 percent discrepancy between the  
12 two schools.

13 So we have teachers who are young  
14 and struggling to be teaching our young people  
15 in the city of Wilmington. The education test  
16 scores you can see from the past results are  
17 declining. We're not learning.

18 The most important issue that  
19 needs to be addressed is the weighted formula.  
20 We cannot continue to have the same dollar  
21 allocation for a student whether they're in  
22 Bayard Middle School, A.I. Middle School, or  
23 Skyline. The needs of young people in the  
24 city are much different. They have a lot of



1 issues that they bring to the table.

2 But, more importantly, if this  
3 issue does not get resolved in some fashion,  
4 we're going to have to go back to court.  
5 We're going to have to go court and let the  
6 court decide what's going on because now all  
7 of a sudden all those legislators who  
8 supported this idea are now saying the  
9 \$6 million is going to hold us up, we're not  
10 going to go forward with a little bit of  
11 money.

12 And with that I wonder too where  
13 are the savings that are going to occur from  
14 the consolidation of the school districts. So  
15 there's got to be some savings that go out  
16 there. But the plan is a very  
17 well-thought-out plan. And I know there's not  
18 a lot of attendance here this evening.  
19 There's not a lot you can do about that.

20 But I would just say for the  
21 record if Tony Allen's the person who's  
22 leading this, I have full confidence that he's  
23 going to get us where we need to go to. And  
24 the governor and Ms. Keely and others who are



1 here, they selected some people to be on this  
2 committee to try and look out for us.

3 But it's the rubber meeting the  
4 road time. It's post time, as we would say,  
5 so we've got to be able to see who's with us  
6 and who's against us. And hopefully we can  
7 get this plan approved because the children  
8 are caught in the middle of this crossfire  
9 between Red Clay and Christina.

10 And I said it once and I'll say  
11 it again. Red Clay would like nothing better  
12 to do than not have us come to them, and  
13 Christina at times would like nothing better  
14 than to get rid of the kids in the city.  
15 Thank you.

16 MR. PIKA: Thank you, Mr. Kelley.

17 Do we have some other sign-ups?

18 If there's anyone else who has  
19 come in late and would like to sign up to  
20 speak, please do so.

21 Just to review where we are on  
22 this, everyone has three minutes to speak,  
23 five minutes if you're speaking for an  
24 organization. And the next speaker is Mike



1 Kempski.

2 MR. KEMPSKI: Hello, everyone.

3 I'm Mike Kempski. I teach sixth graders  
4 social studies at Shue-Medill Middle School,  
5 and I'm the president of the Christina  
6 Education Association.

7 And a couple points to make. The  
8 big concern for us of many concerns is  
9 basically to pass a referendum. We're going  
10 to have to pass a referendum before this plan  
11 ever goes through. And a couple concerns I  
12 wanted to share publicly.

13 I'm going to read just a little  
14 bit here from Matthew Albright's article.  
15 It's printed in the back of the strategic plan  
16 book. And quoting here from Tony Allen, he  
17 says, "There's no question the charter schools  
18 will remain a critical part of public  
19 education in Delaware and that many students  
20 throughout the state will be served by them  
21 and in many cases served well," Allen said.  
22 "However, we cannot continue to operate two  
23 systems with little interaction and  
24 coordination and expect the quality benefits



1 that all of our children deserve. It is our  
2 hope that a plan for charter schools extends  
3 itself to public education in Delaware broadly  
4 and forces stronger collaboration across the  
5 traditional district, charter, and vo-tech  
6 boundaries."

7 I want to connect that thought,  
8 because that gave me some hope that there  
9 would be some movement in that relationship,  
10 and connecting it to an experience I had  
11 knocking on doors in Newark in an effort to  
12 get support for our referendum. I was one of  
13 a group of teachers, parents, and community  
14 members that were doing that.

15 And I knocked on the door of a  
16 parent of a Newark Charter alum, and I asked  
17 him for support. And he told me he wouldn't  
18 support the Christina referendum. I reminded  
19 him that the passage of the referendum is  
20 going to fund all the public schools in the  
21 Christina School District including Newark  
22 Charter.

23 He told me that they could raise  
24 the money through private donations if the



1 referendum fails, and my heart sunk. I didn't  
2 really have any answer to that.

3           And I can't qualify -- quantify  
4 how widespread that particular sentiment is.  
5 But there certainly wasn't a huge effort from  
6 that particular charter community to support  
7 that referendum. And I don't know if that's  
8 even their fault.

9           What I'm asking the group here  
10 and the commission to look at is is that  
11 charter/traditional school relationship set up  
12 in such a competitive way that it's going to  
13 undermine any effort of collaboration. I know  
14 from our representative on the subcommittee  
15 that they're struggling with just the basics  
16 of defining what collaboration is.

17           So I'm asking the commission to  
18 review why that subcommittee is struggling,  
19 and could it be -- I don't think it is, but it  
20 could be issues amongst those individual  
21 representatives, but it might just be that the  
22 structure is set up so that it makes it very  
23 difficult to collaborate. So I appreciate if  
24 people think about that.



1                   We'd really like to pass a  
2 referendum. There's lots of obstacles. We  
3 don't want this to be one. Thank you.

4                   MR. PIKA: Thank you,  
5 Mr. Kempski.

6                   Do we have any other persons  
7 interested in speaking at this time? Don't be  
8 shy.

9                   Okay. What we've done in  
10 previous public hearings where we have  
11 exhausted the audience who wishes to speak is  
12 to suspend the public hearing for a period of  
13 time.

14                   We have had at one of these  
15 another group of five or six people who came  
16 in somewhat later because they knew that the  
17 hour was going to be from 6:30 until 8:00, and  
18 then we reconvene and allow those people to go  
19 on the record as well to make their comments.

20                   So not hearing any other interest  
21 at this point, I'm making a statement, I'm  
22 just looking at a couple of faces people that  
23 I know are here in the audience and haven't  
24 spoken yet. So if you don't have interest at



1 this point, one last call, what I will do is  
2 suspend the hearing, then, at this point.

3 Those of you who are in  
4 attendance are welcome to talk with each other  
5 and kibbutz as much as you want, or you may be  
6 dismissed. It's up to you, however you would  
7 like to do that. Thank you all very much for  
8 coming to this point.

9 (A brief recess was taken.)

10 MR. PIKA: I now call this public  
11 hearing back into session.

12 Is there anyone who wishes to  
13 make one final statement for the record this  
14 evening? Hearing none, then, I declare this  
15 hearing closed. I want to thank you all for  
16 coming this evening and participating.

17 All comments made today or  
18 submitted between November the 17th and  
19 December the 8th will be considered as part of  
20 the final report of the Wilmington Education  
21 Improvement Commission to the State Board of  
22 Education that is to be finalized on December  
23 the 15th.

24 In addition, all comments made



1 today or submitted between the 17th and  
2 January the 14th will be available to the  
3 state board to consider. Thank you all very  
4 much.

5 (Hearing concluded at 7:55 p.m.)  
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## 1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

2  
3 I, SUSAN ARNOLD YODER, Registered  
4 Professional Reporter and Notary Public, do  
5 hereby certify that the foregoing record,  
6 pages 1 through 22 inclusive, is a true and  
7 accurate transcript of my stenographic notes  
8 taken on December 2, 2015, in the  
9 above-captioned matter.

10 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
11 my hand and seal this 8th day of December,  
12 2015, at Wilmington.

13  
14  
15  
16 *Susan A. Yoder*  
17

SUSAN ARNOLD YODER, RPR

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